













**INDIA'S FIGHT**  
**FOR**  
**FREEDOM**  
**1913 – 1937**  
**AN EYEWITNESS STORY**

**KANJI DWARKADAS**



**BOMBAY**  
**POPULAR PRAKASHAN**

Kanji Dwarkadas

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**To**  
***The Memory of***  
***C. Jinarajadasa***  
***and***  
***P. K. Telang***



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel honoured that my distinguished friend Lord Attlee should have kindly agreed to contribute the Foreword. It is in the fitness of things that Lord Attlee who as the Prime Minister of Great Britain was responsible for granting Independence to India, should write a Foreword to my eye-witness story of India's Fight for Freedom. I am grateful to him.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, for whom I have the greatest respect as elder statesman and brilliant scholar and whose friendship and kindness I have cherished for the last five decades, since I entered public life, for writing the Introduction.

My thanks are due to Miss Rodha Vickers, Secretary to Major David Graham Pole of the British Labour Party, for placing at my disposal valuable and important papers of Major David Graham Pole from the period 1916-52, which have been of immense help to me in writing this book. These papers throw a flood of light on the British Labour Party's keen interest in India's claim for Independence since 1916.

Lastly I would like to thank a host of authors, whose records have enabled me to write this story, but to whom, I regret, I cannot thank individually.





## FOREWORD

I have had the honour of enjoying friendship of Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas for some years and have learned to rely upon him as one of widest and fair-minded commentators on Indian affairs. For fifty years he has been an outstanding figure in the labour movement and in the field of social service, having been the originator of several valuable legislative enactments in Bombay. He has described this side of his work in his "Forty-Five Years With Labour." In the present volume although these other activities are touched upon, his main object is to trace India's path to Freedom and Independence from his early association with Mrs. Besant down to the Round Table Conference, which preceded the passing of the Government of India Act. In these pages you can read of all the chief protagonists in the struggle.

He traces the fatalities which beset the movement when good chances of achieving a settlement were thrown away sometimes through the obstinate conservatism of the Governments in Britain or India, sometimes by the lack of realism on the part of Mr. Gandhi and others. There were times when Hindus and Moslems were agreed. There were times when even Conservatives in Britain were prepared for a big advance but India had to wait for many years until 1947.

The story is worth telling by so balanced an observer as Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas who was himself at the heart of things.

ATTLEE



## INTRODUCTION

SHRI Kanji Dwarkadas is a man of varied experience who has distinguished himself in several spheres of public life. He is a person of deep though wide-ranging scholarship and has united the capacity for public service with a deep love for the under-dog including the oppressed and the depressed and backward groups in the country and he has a deep sympathy for the dwellers in the slums and the factory workers. His record of social service has not been as widely acknowledged as it should have been; but many strata of the society in Bombay will long remember him for his unobtrusive but beneficent endeavours to improve their lot in the matter of housing, the regulation of working hours and many other amenities intended to diversify and sweeten their hard existence. Kanji's life has included participation in civic and legislative activities and especially in matters appertaining to the Theosophical Society into which organisation he was inducted by Dr. Besant on the 4th April 1914 when he was 22 years of age and she was 45 years older than himself. As he proudly claims, right from 1918 till her demise in 1933, he had the privilege of being associated with her in every aspect of Dr. Besant's multifarious and dynamic activities; and Kanji and his brother always played the host when Dr. Besant visited Bombay. Kanji's entry into the Theosophical Society was, in his own words, "the most important and happy decision he ever made in his life".

Having been, from about 1915, intimately connected with Dr. Besant's educational and political labours in India and in England, I can bear first hand and personal testimony to the unflinching loyalty and helpful friendship which Kanji ungrudgingly offered to Dr. Besant; and in this connection it may be affirmed that while he was a good hater he was also a basically loyal friend. His loyal friendship and his fervid discipleship

were proffered to Dr. Besant and resulted in a mutual attraction which was perhaps the highlight of Kanji's life. The faculty of friendship and loyalty is so precious and yet so rare that when it is discerned, it deserves to be acclaimed.

Kanji has been the author of many monographs dealing with social reform and allied subjects and he has been a continuous and unflagging contributor to many journals and especially to those conducted by associates like the late Umar Sobani and Dwarkanath Telang and later on, Frank Moraes who, after a distinguished career in the Times of India, is now successfully editing the "Express" Group of Newspapers. Kanji has also produced reminiscences of personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Vithalbhai and Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and successive political and public leaders of Bombay. Catholic in his outlook and in his contacts, he earned the esteem and the intimacy of many Europeans and several Indians of all types and classes including Mohamad Ali Jinnah and his talented but short-lived wife, Rattie, of whom he has produced a touching biography.

Kanji's present work is entitled "India's Fight for Freedom" and the volume covers the period from 1913 to 1937 and his book is termed "An Eye-Witness' Story". It is, in essence, a record of Dr. Besant's work with which Kanji came into contact at many points. He affirms that India will (I would add should) remain grateful to Dr. Besant for awakening the sleeping soul of India and for having brought India near the cherished goal of responsible self-government. He in fact declares that if England had listened to her exhortation during the first World War to grant equality and friendship to India, the history of the world would have been different. It is true also, as Kanji points out, that Gandhiji, though he personally admired Dr. Besant could not always understand her point of view. Kanji adds that it was Dr. Besant who created the mass awakening in India which Gandhiji was able to utilise and expand from the twenty to the fortys of this century.

It is one of the peculiarities of recent Indian History that the memories of great personages seem quickly to fade away as will be seen from the examples of pioneers like Phirozshah Mehta, D. E. Wacha, Gopalkrishna Gokhale and even Pandit Malaviya and V. S. Srinivasa Sastri.

My memories of the Indian National Congress date from 1904 and it is worth mentioning that Mohamad Ali Jinnah was Dadabhai Naoroji's Secretary at the Calcutta Congress of 1906. Kanji recalls that in 1915 when Dr. Besant started the Home Rule League, his brother, Jamnadas, and Dr. K. M. Munshi became the joint editors of the weekly "Young India" and that, at the same time, Jinnah was associated with the Home Rule League; and Kanji himself served under him as Treasurer of the League. It was in 1917 that Jinnah, Kanji, Umar Sobani and Shankerlal Banker helped, by their incessant and formative work, to make the Bombay Home Rule League the central factor in Indian Political Life. I have, in my biography of Dr. Besant, outlined her inspiring work, educational, social and religious, from 1913 to 1933, during which period, breaking away from her past agnostic environment, she threw herself to India's many-sided uplift. She however always remembered and preached the lesson taught to her by Charles Bradlaugh of never transcending the bound of discipline and law and never resorting to violence, express or implicit, in the course of political work.

This book contains a fairly full recital of the conflicts that arose between Dr. Besant and Gandhiji in the course of the non-co-operation movement during which Dr. Besant opposed emphatically the withdrawal of students from schools and colleges and lawyers from courts. It also contains a full and detailed account of how Dr. Besant prepared the ground for Home Rule and wrote her well-known books 'India, A Nation' and 'How India Wrought for Freedom'. The present volume gives an inside account of the preliminary struggles forensic and political that preceded Dr. Besant's internment and the part played by Jinnah in Indian public affairs at that time. Kanji deplors that Jinnah who had engaged himself in an ardent struggle for India's freedom should have broken away and should have been responsible for the momentous and unfortunate partition of India. The book illustrates how Dr. Besant always sought help from several quarters in the course of her work, from Phirozshah Mehta as well as Lajpat Rai, from Tilak as well as from Gandhiji. She was not always welcomed but she placed public good above personal rebuffs and contradictions. The volume makes it clear that influential conservatives like Dinsha Wacha were, from the beginning, opposed to all the political pre-

grammes of Dr. Besant. At a later time some unbalanced political opponents even accused her of being a British spy and a certain political leader compared her to Puthana who gave poisoned milk to Lord Sri Krishna. C. R. Das and S. Srinivasa Iyengar were from the beginning, temperamentally opposed to Dr. Besant and, could see nothing good in her though originally they supported her campaign. Although Dr. Besant had many prominent opponents, she also enjoyed the complete confidence and loyalty of illustrious supporters like Dr. Subramania Iyer, Dr. Bhagwan Das and practically of all the leading personages in Bombay and Madras.

A full account is given in this volume of the interviews and events that preceded the promulgation of the Montague-Chelmsford Report and the special session of the Congress at which I was its Secretary. The book is also remarkable for giving an inside account of the Calcutta Session of the Congress of which Dr. Besant was the President. At this session personal prejudice was engineered against Dr. Besant and her associates. This book gives also an account of the important meeting that she had with the leaders of the Bengal Anarchist group. The contacts between Lokmanya Tilak and Kanji are also recounted and the author was evidently attracted by him.

One of the most interesting chapters of this book relates to an event which created a tremendous stir at the time, namely, the Sheriff's meeting at Bombay, at which Jinnah and his wife as well as Kanji offered what was by no means, non-violent opposition to the Government and the Governor. Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa in 1915 and the author recounts how Gokhale succeeded in preventing Gandhiji from becoming a member of the Servants of India Society in spite of his admiration for him presumably because Gandhiji was regarded as a philosophical anarchist.

Kanji has quoted Dr. Besant's words at the time of the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University when Gandhiji registered a historic protest. Regarding Gandhiji as a philosophical anarchist, she stated "Gandhiji's words are unwise but we honour him for his lofty ideals". The author also reminds us that in the Gujarati Weekly "Navjivan", Gandhiji used these remarkable words "I have taken to dacoity against Government. I am a dacoit". Of course he puts his own interpretation for

the term 'dacoit'. The author makes it clear that Gandhiji's All India Tour during 1915-1916 was carried out at Gokhale's suggestion. He points out that after he met Gandhiji for the first time in 1917 soon after Dr. Besant's internment, they used to meet frequently and says that the work that he was doing for the amelioration of labour and his social service was appreciated by Gandhiji. The efforts made by Kanji in conjunction with his colleagues in Ahmedabad and Bombay appealed to Gandhiji. The passing of the Rowlatt Act and the tragic happenings in Amritsar are picturesquely narrated and the author observes that Gandhiji's perfect trust and confidence in the bonafides and sense of justice of the British until the end of 1918 collapsed as the result of the happenings of 1917-1918. When Kanji and his brother, Jamnadas, and friends like Umar Sobani and Shankerlal Banker wished to join Gandhiji's new Satyagraha Sabha and to sign its pledge, Dr. Besant dissented from Gandhiji's programme and Kanji mournfully describes the great Bombay meeting when Dr. Besant voiced her opposition to Gandhiji's movement and incidentally lost her erstwhile popularity among the Indian populace. Kanji, as a rule, follower of Dr. Besant, accuses Gandhiji of creating a new religion of make-believism. Quoting extensively from several sources, the author describes the whole history of the Passive Resistance Movement and he affirms that "Gandhiji always cast a spell which few including myself were able to resist."

Kanji has done a real service by recounting the inner history of Gandhiji's reactions to the consequences of his own programme. As soon as Gandhiji realised that he had under-rated the innate but unsuspected depths of violence in the minds of many of his followers he retraced his steps. It was at this period that Dr. Besant opposing civil disobedience uttered the sentence "brickbats have to be met by bullets". This historic sentence finally pin-pointed the divergence of views between Dr. Besant and the followers of Gandhiji.

The incident at Jallianwalla Bagh and its aftermath made Gandhiji the inevitable leader of India and Indian history thereafter became synonymous with his life and with the work of himself and his lieutenants like Vithalbhai and Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhulabhai Desai and Jawaharlal Nehru.

The book contains an account of Dr. Besant's endeavours



to organise the Home Rule Deputation to England so as to awaken the conscience of the British people. Although the boycott of the Simon Commission and the Dandi March and the first and second Round Table Conferences are all described in detail, nevertheless Dr. Besant and her followers like Kanji were really outside the ranks of those who carried on the Congress programme.

In Chapter 22 there is a valuable resume of the activities of Dr. Besant and her colleagues in England and a large number of extracts from her letters which would be otherwise inaccessible, have been brought to light.

After the Second Round Table Conference and as a consequence of what the author describes as Gandhiji's mood of suspense and uncertainty and of Sir Samuel Hoare's breach of faith, there came the earnest but unfruitful efforts of people like Birla to get the British Statesman to take a more friendly view of Gandhiji. When the Communal Award was issued granting separate electorate to the Depressed Classes, Gandhiji announced his celebrated decision to fast unto death; and the aftermath of that decision is recounted in great detail in this book as well as the varying reactions to the fast of persons like C. R. Das and Jawaharlal Nehru the latter of whom went so far as to criticise Gandhiji for choosing a comparatively minor issue for a supreme sacrifice.

Early in 1932 the Franchise Committee, the Federal Finance Committee and the States Enquiry Committee were brought into being and on the 27th June 1932 Sir Samuel Hoare proclaimed his new policy and the Third Round Table Conference to which Dr. Besant was not invited, led to the White Paper of 1933. In response to the strong opposition which developed against the White Paper, a Joint Select Committee was announced of which I was a Member. It was a thousand pities that even on this Committee Dr. Besant did not find a place. Personally I declined to join the Committee in protest against this omission but Dr. Besant herself strongly advised me to accept the position.

As an unfortunate result of the various Round Table Conferences, Jinnah's opposition and his plans for partition of India developed, though slowly at first. The book gives valuable details of what happened from 1934 onwards to precipitate the

decision as to the partition of India. The position in the country became very difficult indeed, and, as Kanji narrates, Gandhiji on the 30th August 1934 went so far as to say that he would gladly retire from the Congress and devote himself to the development of civil disobedience and Harijan work. At this stage even Jawaharlal Nehru was pessimistic. Kanji quotes the official history of the Congress as saying that "Jawaharlal Nehru came to India full of communistic and Marxian ideas. The achievements of the Congress disappointed him. He found himself as one against the World." In the meantime, Dr. Besant's health which began to give way in 1929 grew steadily worse although she continued to hold conferences in India and in England advocating Home Rule for India and energetically organising British support. During 1933 Kanji saw her but she was very ill and she passed away in September 1933. The author quotes eight lines written by Dr. Besant as illustrative of her rare outlook on life.

"If a comrade be faithless,  
Let us be faithful to him;  
If an enemy injure,  
Let us forgive him;  
If a friend betray,  
Let us stand by him;  
Then shall the hidden god  
In us shine forth".

The book ends with an account of the enactment of the Government of India Bill, the refusal of the Congress to accept office and its subsequent decision to join the Government.

Side by side with his political work, Kanji has performed most valuable service in the fight against commercialised vice in Bombay, in the efforts in connection with the Children's Aid Society and birth-control measures and with reference to the Age of Consent Committee and the Indian Cinematograph Committee.

In essence, this volume is the story of numerous struggles and many achievements, of many friendships and many loyalties; and incidentally, it is also a story which reveals several hitherto un-known and un-suspected facts in relation to the public life of India and leading up to the attainment of Indian Independence. That Independence was primarily won as a by-

product of the Second World War, the consequent collapse of Imperialistic and Colonial ideas and the universal spread of the Doctrine of Self-Determination. In the closing stages of a poignant struggle, India was led with the determination by Gandhiji and his immediate associates; but their work would have been infinitely more difficult but for the creative and dedicated efforts in the direction of religious awakening, educational advancement, social uplift and political emancipation contributed by Dr. Besant and her associates and colleagues, one of the most prominent of them having been the author of this book, Kanji Dwarkadas.

C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR.

4th May, 1960

## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	...	vii
FOREWORD by the Rt. Hon'ble Earl Attlee	...	ix
INTRODUCTION by Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar	...	xi
Chapter I: I Meet Annie Besant	...	1
Chapter II: Early Years of Mrs. Besant — 1847 to 1893	...	3
Chapter III: Mrs. Besant's First Twenty Years in India 1893 - 1913	...	11
Chapter IV: Mrs. Besant Enters Politics—1913	...	20
Chapters V, VI: Mrs. Besant Prepares Ground for Home Rule, 1915	...	31
Chapter VII: I Meet Jinnah	...	60
Chapter VIII: 1917 - 18	...	68
Chapter IX: I Meet Gandhiji	...	81
Chapter X: Rowlatt Act Satyagraha: Gandhiji and Mrs. Besant: Amritsar and After	...	95
Chapter XI: Mrs. Besant	...	120
Chapter XII: December 1919—Amritsar Congress King's Clemency	...	137
Chapter XIII: The New Reforms	...	157
Chapter XIV: Gandhiji and Prohibition	...	170
Chapter XV: Moplah Riots	...	179
Chapter XVI: My Social Work: Commercialised Vice	...	198
Chapter XVII: Children's Act Enforced: Children's Aid Society	...	236
Chapter XVIII: Infant Mortality, Birth Control and National Baby Week	...	251
Chapter XIX: The Indian Cinematograph Committee	...	258

Chapter	XX	Age of Consent Committee ...	265
Chapter	XXI	Swaraj Party and Council Entry ...	270
Chapter	XXII	Mrs. Besant's Letters—1922-1924 National Convention ...	290
Chapter	XXIII	Mrs. Besant's Fifty Years' Public Service 1874 - 1924 ...	310
Chapter	XXIV	Jinnah—1924 - 1928 Simon Commission & Boycott ...	320
Chapter	XXV	Nehru Report ...	336
Chapter	XXVI	Jinnah—1929 ...	348
Chapter	XXVII	"1929" ...	355
Chapter	XXVIII	Dandi March, Gandhi's and Slocombe Interview ...	370
Chapter	XXIX	The First Round Table Conference	382
Chapter	XXX	The Second Round Table Conference	398
Chapter	XXXI	Aftermath of the Second Round Table Conference ...	414
Chapter	XXXII	Hoare's Breach of Faith Third R.T.C. Jinnah in London Jinnah Returns to India—Jan. 1934 Congress Calls Off C.D.: Congress Session in Bombay, 1934 ...	431
Chapter	XXXIII :	Dr. Besant Passes Away—Tributes ...	447
Chapter	XXXIV :	Joint Select Committee The Government of India Bill : Act Comes into Force The Congress First Refuses and then Accepts Office in Provinces ...	460
INDEX			474

## CHAPTER I

### I MEET ANNIE BESANT

I first saw Mrs. Annie Besant on April 22, 1909, when I attended her lecture at the Gaiety Theatre. I have no recollection of what she said then, but I do vividly remember the thought which passed through my mind as, coming out of the Theatre, I saw her driving away in an open horse-driven carriage. Her host, Mr. Dharamsi Morarji Goculdas, was seated by her side. This thought was: Will I ever have the privilege of sitting by her side? This seemed a fantastic idea for I was but a lad of seventeen in the First Year at the Elphinstone College while she was sixty-two, a great world figure. But my thought was more than a dream come true. Right from 1918 till her passing away fifteen years later in 1933, I had the unique and happy privilege of always being with Mrs. Besant on her travels around India. And I stayed as a personal guest in Adyar next to her rooms and I was her host in Bombay.

On Friday, 3rd April 1914, I listened to her lecture on 'National Education.' I was thrilled; I was taken off my feet. I wanted just one thing; I wanted to shake hands with her. And when I learnt that she was going to initiate new members for the Theosophical Society, the next morning, before sailing for England and that she would shake hands with the new members, my happiness knew no bounds. I offered myself for membership of the Theosophical Society though I had not the slightest conception then of what Theosophy meant and what Theosophical Society stood for. The die was cast.

"I hope" these were her first words to me as she shook hands with me, "you will be a good theosophist". This was her Blessing. As I recall this event of over fifty years ago, I make bold to say this was the happiest and most important decision I ever made. There was no turning back. She penetrated into my soul through her blue, beautiful, magnetic eyes, and recognised in me her *Chela* and devoted and loyal friend

of the ages past. And this relationship of *Guru* and *Chela* between two old friends, she sixty-seven and I, twenty-two, was further developed in this incarnation.

To Mrs. Besant, re-incarnation was not just a popular and superstitious belief. She knew it to be a fact. Her previous incarnations were, *inter alia*, Giordono Bruno and Hypatia of Alexandria and she told me that she was a Kashmiri Brahmin and passed away in 1843 to be reborn four years later as Annie Wood. She gave a lecture at Sorbonne, Paris, in 1911 on Giordono Bruno. She spoke French as fluently as English.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY YEARS OF MRS. BESANT—1847 TO 1893

WHATEVER else may be India's faults, I hope ingratitude is not one of them. India will always remain grateful to Mrs. Besant for awakening the sleeping soul of India and having brought India to the cherished goal of responsible self-Government. If only England had listened to her exhortations during the first World War to grant equality and friendship to India when she demanded it, there would have been no second World War and there would not have existed today the problem of racial discrimination and racial hatred between the coloured and white races and the problem of Communism in Asia. Gandhiji did not understand her point of view and he refused to join hands with her as far back as 1915 to demand Swaraj for India. It was she who created mass awakening in India which Gandhiji was able to use in his movements of the Twenties, Thirties and early Forties. But his were negative movements which led the country into blind alleys and India came out of these through the disastrous Second World War. But the most fruitful years of the Century—the Twenties—were wasted in negative efforts, which, if we had followed Mrs. Besant's advice and guidance, would have taken us to nation-building activities and more contacts, co-operation and friendship with the progressive countries of the world, particularly the U.S.A.

Today, India has attained the status of a great nation and New Delhi is not only the Capital of India, but a focal point in International politics, where the effect of all major world events is felt. Because of this, India has a great responsibility in so far as its role in these events is concerned.

Not only because of this international importance but also because of the need for truth to be known one must endeavour to record the history of the Independence Movement before memories die. Because when memories die, myths are accepted



as truth, and myths distort facts. There is a tendency to write Indian history in the Stalinistic Gandhian way and this has to be avoided. It is, therefore, the duty of those of the older generation who have been active participants in the freedom movement to record the facts and history of the Independence Movement, as they have seen it.

Some of those who started their political careers five decades ago are fortunately still actively with us. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar attended the Indian National Congress for the first time at Calcutta in 1906 at which Dadabhai Naoroji presided and M. A. Jinnah was his Secretary. Jawaharlal Nehru who passed away in May 1964, started his political work in 1912 after his return from England.

I first met K. M. Munshi in November 1915 when he became Joint Editor, along with my brother, Jamnadas, of the weekly *Young India*. The paper supported Mrs. Besant's political work. Jinnah took me as the Treasurer of the All-India Home Rule League (Bombay Branch) in June, 1917, within a week after Mrs. Besant was interned by the Government of Madras.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Acharya Kripalani met Gandhiji in 1917 for the first time when the latter went to Bihar and started the Champaran Indigo workers' satyagraha. Rajgopalachari's political career in Madras under the leadership of Gandhiji began a little later.

I have never claimed having been a political leader. I have always been a political worker under Mrs. Besant's leadership and I had silently worked, observed and recorded the events of the last fifty years. In July 1917, when Umar Sobani and Shankerlal Banker, Secretaries of the Home Rule League, and I met Jinnah frequently in his Chambers at the High Court to discuss the programme of meetings and other work of the Home Rule League, Jinnah asked me: "Do you want to work or do you want to make speeches?" Without a moment's hesitation, I replied: "I want to work". "Remember then," Jinnah said, "your name will never be publicised". For this warning, I have always felt grateful to Jinnah and I never made an attempt to become a political leader. This gave me a better opportunity to observe and carefully to record events of the last fifty years. I however gave talks at the various Universities

I visited during my two visits to the U.S.A. in 1946 and 1951 and to the Rotary Clubs in Bombay and Singapore during the last fifteen years. In April 1918, when Mrs. Besant was in Bombay, Jinnah told her at a meeting of the Home Rule League Committee: "Kanji is the best worker in the League. He works quietly and never makes a speech". Mrs. Besant smiled and approved of this but Jinnah's remarks gave offence to some of my ambitious colleagues.

I saw at first hand Mrs. Besant's great religious, social and political work in India during this critical, creative period of Indian history from 1918 to 1933. Apart from what I knew of her and her work in England from her Autobiography, I had the unique privilege of hearing from her during our several long talks, the minute details of her personal life, of her thoughts and of her work in England. Of Charles Bradlaugh, she spoke with great respect and affection. She gave me details of the 'Bloody Trafalgar Square Sunday' when she said she was saved by a miracle. She thought all was lost. Master M took her out of the danger spot in which she had found herself. She did not know about this at the time. It was only much later that she found out about her miraculous escape. Bernard Shaw called her 'the heroine of Trafalgar Square'. Dr. Arthur Nethercot in his *First Five Lives of Dr. Annie Besant* deals with her life and work in England from the time of her birth on October 1st, 1847 till her departure for India in 1893. We read in this book of the thoughts and the movements of the nineteenth century and it is a story of the old world.

Mrs. Besant's early life was comparatively happy and free from care. She travelled to Germany and France and enjoyed music and horse-riding. Her unhappy marriage at the age of twenty and her subsequent separation from her husband, son and daughter can be passed over. She felt bitterly when her children were taken away from her and she was unhappy. She soon found that she could speak fluently and vigorously—a discovery she made the best use of in the remaining fifty-five years of her life.

As a militant free thinker, a crusading journalist, a passionate pamphleteer, a lecturer whom Bernard Shaw called "the greatest orator in England and possibly in Europe", a fearless advocate of birth-control, a social reformer who translated

theory into practice in London's East End, a forward-looking member of the London School Board, and a Labour agitator and Union-organizer, Mrs. Besant had done in twenty years the work which would normally have been spread over two thousand years and defied the forces of religion, orthodoxy and conservatism on many fronts.

Bernard Shaw concedes that she had a sense of fun but that life did not come to her as a comedy. He adds she was a Shakespearian tragedian. I think Shaw is mistaken in this opinion. Mrs. Besant had a great sense of humour and I used to see her eyes twinkling with humour but she was too much of a realist and she knew too much of life to be a comedian but certainly she was not a tragedian. She never wore a long face and she was an optimist and she was sure "the End is a Great Triumph".

One peculiar feature of the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century in England and elsewhere was that the world was passing through a period of unbelief leading not only to agnosticism but also to atheism. Bradlaugh and Annie Besant were atheists. Bradlaugh died atheist. Annie Besant turned into a Theosophist. Then came what is known as Western liberal thought and this invaded the educated classes of India. Educated Indians forgot and lost faith in India's ancient philosophy and religion and India was rescued from this stupor by the Theosophical Society and Mrs. Besant. She rendered the greatest service to India by waking up its sleeping soul and made Indians respect their ancient heritage and revived in them the feeling of self-respect and taught them to stand on their own legs.

She gave fourteen lectures between 1875 and 1884 on the history of the Great French Revolution from the stand-point of the people. Very few know today that in 1879, she wrote, "England, India and Afghanistan—the story of Afghanistan or why the Tory Government gags the Indian Press—a plea for the weak against the Strong"? This book tells us of the British misrule in India about 85 years ago. "Few records of conquest", she says, "show stains so foul as the story of the subjugation of Hindustan by this originally merchant Association". This book is informative and well written. Mrs. Besant wrote: "On the whole, glancing over the present state of affairs, we

(England) can scarcely congratulate ourselves on India as it is. Yet we can not now simply try to throw off our vast responsibility; we cannot, having seized India, now fling it aside. What is our duty to this great land and how may we best remedy our crimes of the past? The answer comes in one word: "Liberty". Train India for freedom; educate India for self-government. Do not only proclaim that Indians shall be eligible for the high places of the State; place them there. Let Indian judges administer justice; let Indian officers rise to high command; let Indian civil servants win the prizes of administration. Let Indians be taken into the ruling council, and let the imposition of taxation pass into native hands. They understand the needs and the capabilities of their own people better than we do, and would be able to raise money while inflicting less suffering. The work cannot be done in a day, but it might be begun. The steady resistance of English officialism must be overborne; the endeavour to keep all highly paid places in English hands must be defeated. Unhappily, the will is wanting, not the power. In the old days, Indian institutions were representative, let the old genius of native rule be revived and let a system of representative government gradually replace the centralised despotism of our present sway."

"I would not, with Major Evans Bell — in his thoughtful and useful work 'Our Great Vassal Empire' advocate the re-establishment of the native States, because with the re-establishment of many semi-independent States would also be re-established the old jealousies and rivalries perpetually threatening order and peace. I would let the supreme power gradually pass, not into the hands of the princes of India, but into the hands of the Indian people, so that a mighty self-governing nation should slowly arise from the ashes of the dead native and foreign despotisms."

"We hear much now of the danger of Russian interference. Make India free and Russian ghost will be forever laid to rest. At present, the oppressed Indians may look towards Russia as a possible deliverer from English tyranny, and may fancy that out of the struggle between two invaders they may win some chance of regaining their own country for themselves. But the Russian yoke is not so easy that a free India would bow the neck before it; begin even, to build up Indian liberty, and

Indians will be first to spring to their frontier to beat back the northern bear who would lay waste the garden of freedom."

Mrs. Besant, the great mystic, saw in 1879 the future of India as it unfolded in the first fifty years of the Twentieth Century.

Is this not astounding? In 1879, Mrs. Besant said that the answer to British misrule in India was self-government to India in slow stages; and she also suggested the liquidation of the Indian Princes. Mrs. Besant knew the problem and she knew the answer in 1879.

Mrs. Besant was 32 years old when she wrote this book. Dinshaw Wacha was then 37. Pherozshah Mehta 34, Tilak 22, Motilal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore 18, Chimanlal Setalvad 14, Gokhale 13, Srinivas Sastri 10, Gandhi 8, Jinnah 3 and C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar 1 and Jawaharlal Nehru was born ten years after this book was written!

In 1875, Mrs. Besant opposed the grant of huge sums for expenses for the visit to India of the then Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII). India, she complained, was much too poor and could not afford these big expenses.

Both Bradlaugh and she were interested in India and Bradlaugh came to India to attend the sessions of the Indian National Congress in Lahore in December, 1889. He was called in Parliament "the Member for India" and he espoused its cause in Parliament and demanded, with Mrs. Besant, self-government for India. If his Party had been in power at that time, Bradlaugh might well have been the Secretary of State for India.

Another British Statesman, George Lansbury, worked with her during the Eighties and early Nineties. He praised her work for Labour and her successful efforts at unionisation. This historical fact is significant because Lansbury was the Founder-Chairman in London in 1916 of Mrs. Besant's Home Rule for India League; and he introduced in 1927 in the House of Commons a private Bill, "The Commonwealth of India Bill", which was prepared by Mrs. Besant, Tej Bahadur Sapru, and C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar.

Bradlaugh died in 1891 and amongst those who attended his funeral at Woking, miles away from London, was the young Indian studying for the Bar—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

History is much the poorer in not knowing and recording Gandhiji's thoughts on that day. It is a coincidence that both Bradlaugh and Gandhiji died on 30th January.

Gandhiji went and saw Madam H. P. Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant in London. But he did not join the Theosophical Society. All the same he kept Mrs. Besant's photograph in his room in South Africa. Gandhiji did not know of the existence of the "Bhagwad Gita" till a British Theosophist friend gave him in South Africa a copy of the Bhagwad Gita translated in English verse by Mrs. Annie Besant. He read it immediately, and followed it up by reading Edwin Arnold's "The Divine Song" and "The Light of Asia".

I am making an attempt to write the *story* of India, of the last fifty years. I am not writing the history of India nor am I making my story autobiographical except when dealing with my political and labour work and work in the Bombay Legislative Council (1921-1923), the Municipal Corporation (1922-1935), and my social work in the Bombay Vigilance Association, the Children's Aid Society, the Infant Welfare Society, etc., etc. I will not deal with my labour work in this book as I have dealt with it fully in my "45 Years With Labour" published in 1961. The modest role that I assign to myself in writing this book is that of the squirrel who thought she could help Shri Ramchandra to build the bridge between India and Lanka (now Ceylon) and of an observer, a recorder, immensely eager to play my part—however insignificant—in winning Freedom for India.

My story as it has unfolded before my eyes, would cover the most important period of Indian History of the Twentieth Century, and would deal with the pillars of the Indian Freedom Movement of three generations, principal amongst whom are Mrs. Annie Besant, Gandhiji, Jinnah, Tilak, C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Dr. Ambedkar, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Srinivas Sastri, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari and C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, all of whom I knew and know personally and some of whom I knew intimately and enjoyed the privilege of close friendship.

To make this work possible, I have with me over 350 files of confidential memoranda, letters and articles to the Press, my talks with various leaders and my good memory.

Since the passing away of Mrs. Besant in September, 1933, I have not joined any other political party. My good friends suggest, not unkindly, that I run two Parties in India, one, Political and the other, Labour, and that the membership of these two Parties is confined to one—viz. myself! There are no dissensions, group loyalties or intrigues in my Party. All decisions are taken unanimously, without any mental reservations. I write freely, frankly and fearlessly, I write neither to please nor to displease.

### CHAPTER III

#### MRS. BESANT'S FIRST TWENTY YEARS IN INDIA 1893 - 1913

MRS. BESANT set foot for the first time on the Indian soil (Tuticorin) *via* Colombo on 16th November, 1893.

In the first twenty years of her Indian life—1893 to 1913, Mrs. Besant did religious, educational and social work.

Writing about Dr. Besant some years ago, Bernard Shaw said: "It is perhaps a little hard on Annie Besant that the various phases of her public activities should be explained by others, who can not in the nature of things possibly know as much about them as she knows herself and whose right to determine the order of their importance for her is very questionable".

Geoffrey West in his biography of Annie Besant published in 1929—she told me that it was a well written biography and fair to her—gives the answer to Bernard Shaw.

He says: "The Theosophical must be declared the most important of all influences in Mrs. Besant's life, if apart from everything else, only because it brought her to India, the scene during the last 40 years of her most enduring labours. India was and is the headquarters of the Theosophical Society and the home of the Masters and the great Mahatma".

"Twice before this incarnation as Annie Besant, she was martyred in the West in the bodies of Giordano Bruno and the lovely Hypatia of Alexandria. But her memories penetrated between and beyond and she realised that she was one of those who though born for this life in a Western land and clad in a Western body, can yet look back to earlier incarnations, in which they drank the milk of spiritual wisdom from the breast of their true mother", and who "must feel even the magic of her immemorial past, must dwell even under the spell of her deathless fascination for they are bound to India by all the sacred memories of their past."



Therefore, from Mrs. Besant's own point of view the connection between Theosophy and her Indian social and political labours is very close and intimate. As a Theosophist, she saw all her earlier life as merely a preparation for the work her Masters set before her in India and she avowed that in every sphere of action, she worked under their Direct Guidance.

When she landed in India for the first time in 1893, she found educated Indians were hanging their heads as if in shame of their own culture and their own past. They accepted superior patronising criticism from uninstructed critics as their due and it was possible for Macaulay to assert that there was more truth and consolation to be derived from a single English book than from all the literature of the East.

One day in September, 1920, after the end of the Special Session of the Calcutta Congress, when I was driving through the Howrah Bridge at Calcutta with Mrs. Besant during a busy hour, she pointed out to me the Bengalee people walking, attired in dhoti, kurta and chaddar, and told me of the change that had come over India again as regards its clothing during the 30 years—1893 to 1920. She said: 'When I first came to India in 1893 and passed through Calcutta, I found the Bengalees all dressed up in black suits. They had given up their old national costume and had taken to the Western way of dressing. That was a great mistake. The Indian dress, white cotton dhoti, and white cotton or silk kurta is beautiful, artistic and clean and suits the climatic conditions of India'.

If today the Indian feels proud of his past and hopeful of his future, if he realises that his country is an important entity in the Comity of the Nations, it is because these beliefs were cherished and fostered by persons like Col. Olcott, H. P. Blavatsky and later by Mrs. Besant who popularised the Indian scriptures and, we must admit frankly and honestly, acquainted us with our own heritage.

This work has been elaborated and perfected by many Indian and European scholars and writers, but if to one person more than another must be attributed the beginning of the feeling of true patriotism, hardly any will hesitate before mentioning the name of Mrs. Besant.

As in England so in India her long, busy and active life was full of Outer Storms but of Inner Peace as I can personally

testify and it brought in its train its failures and successes, its aspirations and achievements to Mrs. Besant and to the cause for which she stood.

There can not be any water-tight compartments to separate the different aspects of her activities in India in regard to her religious, educational, social and later political work. Right till the death of Col. Olcott in 1907, when she was elected as the President of the Theosophical Society, the position she held till her passing away 26 years later and gave to that great international Association of Humanity the weight of her name and her reputation and the great organizing capacity, Banaras (now Varanasi) was her home. Keeping out of active politics, she confined her energies solely to Education, Religion and Social Reform. "Educate, educate, educate" was her slogan. Social reform took an equally strong place on her platform. "Know your country's past and then you will respect her and respect yourself" she said. She laid equal emphasis on the education of girls.

But the greatest work that she did was to restore the national confidence in Indians, for no progress is possible in an atmosphere of frustration. When she came, Dayanand, who was no more, was, by the general masses, considered an iconoclast and revolutionary. Shree Ramakrishna Paramahansa was dead and his brilliant disciple Swami Vivekanand was interested in acquiring for India a reputation in foreign lands. But Mrs. Besant worked in India. She worked not from without but from within the psychological framework of the Indian mind. She was too clear-sighted not to see that the social system as it existed during the 1890's and before had become an anachronism. She believed that nature, not birth, opens the path of discipleship and leads to the attainment of the Perfection that is Him. She studied the Indian social system with unerring perspicacity and saw the part it had played. Chaldea, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome have perished, mighty though once they were. India, which was their contemporary, has outlived them all and was now lifting her proud head once more to breathe the rising sun of a new dawn. She said this because she had a true historical vision, not merely the zeal of the reformer, and as early as 1905 she said "I am bound to say that I did not believe the caste system can continue in

India in the changing life of the nation and with the heavy responsibilities which more and more still fall upon her sons".

In the early days when we were suffering from an inferiority complex with regard to everything which was Indian, she restored to us confidence in our capacity as a nation.

The transformation of the religious life in India, among Hindus particularly, which Annie Besant brought about, is one of the wonders of her life. She came as a stranger, not knowing Sanskrit; yet as she expounded the old philosophies, she poured forth a wealth of knowledge which amazed cultured Hindus. Far more than her knowledge, however, was her wonderful love for the vanished greatness of India and her indignation at India's sunken condition.

In 1898, she founded the Central Hindu College in Benares. There came from Britain and from the United States, Theosophists to help her in the work of the College. After the College was taken over by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya to become the nucleus of the Hindu University, her great services to the success of the College were recognised by a special legislation to give her a seat on the Governing Body. The Degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred upon her as a special distinction in recognition of her services to Indian Education.

During these years, she confined her energies to educational, religious and social reform. She talked and worked against child marriage and no married boy was admitted in the Central Hindu College. She befriended the untouchables and depressed classes and called them the "suppressed" classes. The earliest schools in India for the children of the depressed classes were run by the Theosophical Society under the direct inspiration, guidance and monetary assistance of Olcott and Annie Besant.

She was an ardent supporter of Women's suffrage not only in Britain but also in India. In India she was an untiring worker for the uplift of women and pleaded again and again for a radical change in social conditions though she never desired any modification of the Indian woman's temperament, which she held was one of the most spiritual in the world.

It is interesting to note Jawaharlal Nehru's reactions to Mrs. Besant as far back as 1901. He says in his autobiography: "When I was about eleven, a new resident tutor, Ferdinand T. Brooks, came and took charge of me. He was partly

Irish (on his father's side) and his mother had been a French or a Belgian. He was a keen theosophist who had been recommended to my father by Mrs. Annie Besant. For nearly three years he was with me and in many ways, he influenced me greatly. F. T. Brooks developed in me a taste for reading. Brooks also initiated me into the mysteries of science. We rigged up a little laboratory and there I used to spend long and interesting hours working out experiments in elementary physics and chemistry.

"Apart from my studies, F. T. Brooks brought a new influence to bear upon me which attracted me powerfully for a while. This was theosophy. He used to have weekly meetings of theosophists in his rooms, and I attended them and gradually imbibed theosophical phraseology and ideas. There were metaphysical arguments and discussions about reincarnation and the astral and other super-natural bodies, and auras, and the doctrine of Karma, and references not only to big books by Madame Blavatsky and other theosophists but to the Hindu scriptures, the Buddhist Dhammapada, Pythagoras, Apollanius Tyanaeus, and various philosophies and mystics. I did not understand much that was said but it all sounded very mysterious and fascinating and I felt that here was the key to the secrets of the Universe. For the first time I began to think consciously and deliberately, of religion and other worlds. The Hindu religion especially went up in my estimation; not the ritual or ceremonial part, but its great books, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita. I did not understand them of course but they seemed very wonderful. I dreamed of astral bodies and imagined myself flying vast distances. This dream of flying high up in the air (without any appliance) has indeed been a frequent one throughout my life; and sometimes it has been vivid and realistic and the countryside seemed to lie underneath me in vast panorama. I do not know how the modern interpreters of dreams, Freud and others, would interpret this dream.

"Mrs. Annie Besant visited Allahabad in those days and delivered several addresses on theosophical subjects. I was deeply moved by her oratory and returned from her speeches dazed and as in a dream. I decided to join the

Theosophical Society, although I was only thirteen then. When I went to ask father's permission, he laughingly gave it; he did not seem to attach importance to the subject either way. I was a little hurt by his lack of feeling. Great as he was in many ways in my eyes, I felt that he was lacking in spirituality. As a matter of fact he was an old theosophist having joined the Society in its early days when Madame Blavatsky was in India. Curiosity probably led him to it more than religion and he soon dropped out of it, but some of his friends, who had joined with him, persevered and rose high in the spiritual hierarchy of the Society.

"So I became a member of the Theosophical Society at thirteen, and Mrs. Besant herself performed the ceremony of initiation, which consisted of good advice and instruction in some mysterious signs, probably a relic of freemasonry. I was thrilled. I attended the Theosophical Convention at Benares and saw old Colonel Olcott with his fine beard.

"Soon after F. T. Brooks left me. I lost touch with Theosophy, and in a remarkably short time (partly because I went to school in England) theosophy left my life completely. But I have no doubt, that those years with F. T. Brooks left a deep impress upon me, and I feel that I owe a debt to him and to theosophy. But I am afraid that theosophists have since then gone down in my estimation. Instead of the chosen ones they seem to be very ordinary folk, liking security better than a risk, a soft job more than the martyr's lot. But for Mrs. Besant I always had the warmest admiration."

Colonel Olcott, President of the Theosophical Society, passed away on Feb. 17, 1907 and Mrs. Besant was elected President in his place in June. From 1893 to 1907 her headquarters were in Shanti Kunj, Benares (Varanasi) and from the time she was elected President of the Theosophical Society right till her passing away in September 1933 Adyar, Madras, was her headquarters.

A new phase of Mrs. Besant's activity began when she became attached to two Indian boys, then 14 and 11, and pronounced the elder of them, Krishnamurti, as the vehicle in the

future of a great "World Teacher". The father of the boys was himself a Theosophist and in the beginning he handed over the guardianship of the boys to her, in order that they might receive a far better education than he, as a poor man, would be able to give them. Later, he quarrelled with her and desired to take the boys away. But the boys were in England and were far more attached to her than to their natural father. They refused to go back to him, and Dr. Besant defended their interests when a case was filed against her by the father. It is interesting to note that C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, then 33, now 85, appeared for the father, against Mrs. Besant. His comments on this case deserve being quoted in full:

"In the years 1912 and 1913 it fell to my lot to oppose Dr. Basant in relation to a particular matter respecting the guardianship of J. Krishnamurti and his brother. It fell to me to fight Dr. Besant, to fight Mr. Arundale, to fight Mr. B. P. Wadia, to fight Sir Subramania Iyer, and many others, for whom I had great reverence and respect. Naturally, as a lawyer, I felt it my duty in cross-examination to suggest things that were resented. I had to suggest hidden depths of iniquity in what might have been a normal affair, but it was characteristic of Mrs. Besant that not one of the epithets I used or extravagances of speech on my part deflected her from her purpose. It was after conclusion of the case which, with childish vanity, I felt proud of winning, when I was wrapped up in my success, she said to me: 'I think you have fought a clean fight. Will you come and join me to work for India's political uplift?'."

It was three days after the conclusion of the case. Once again, as twice before, Dr. Besant was her own counsel and day after day pleaded her case. She lost the case in the lower Court and the boys were made wards of Court, and in addition, their minority—eighteen years under Hindu Law—was prolonged to twenty-one years. Then she took it to the High Court of Appeal, where she again lost it. Then she took the case up to the Privy Council, and in 1914 for the first time the boys, now 18 and 15, appeared in Court to state their side of the case. Dr. Besant won in the Privy Council, the Council holding that the minors should have been represented in the original suit, and that it should have been brought up in England where the

minors were resident. The Privy Council laid down the principle that when dealing with minors who had come to an age of discrimination, no judge should dispose of them as if they were mere "bales of goods" but that the minors themselves should be consulted regarding their ideas as to their welfare.

No story about Dr. Besant can be complete without reference to a phase of her life and activity little known to and still less understood by the public, but of the utmost consequences so far as she herself is concerned. This is her occult life. When Madame Blavatsky passed away, she had gathered round her a band of students dedicated to the idea of Discipleship, working under Rishis or Masters of the Wisdom. Two years after Madame Blavatsky's death, Dr. Besant became the head of the esoteric organization known as the "Esoterical School". She had a following of several thousands of members of the Theosophical Society throughout the world who looked to her as their spiritual instructor. Those who came into intimate contact with her like myself knew how much she had achieved in Yoga, and how, therefore, her guidance was based upon first-hand knowledge on occult matters. She constantly used certain of these Yoga powers, particularly that of Clairvoyance, to investigate the nature of the superphysical realms and many have been her books on this recondite subject, her work being usually in collaboration with her colleague, C. W. Leadbeater. A remarkable piece of work done by Mrs. Besant and C. W. Leadbeater was the examination of the chemical elements of Chemistry by means of Clairvoyance. This record of work, begun in 1895, was continued throughout the years and it has added a most striking contribution to the knowledge of the atom, parallel to that which is being discovered by physicists and chemists.

No one will really understand Annie Besant unless due value is given to an unusual factor in her character, which is, her intense devotion to India as her Motherland, and to the Indian people as her people. From the first year of her coming to India, she not only lived with Indians but she lived as one of them. She wore the 'Sari', she sat cross-legged on the ground or on a chowki at work, she ate seated on the ground in the Indian fashion, and not at table, using the right hand and not spoon or fork.

Practically, every year during these twenty years (1893-1914), Mrs. Besant went abroad all over the world, for three or four months on lecturing tours and the countries thus covered included England, France, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, United States of America, Australia, Malaya and Singapore.

Before I turn to her great political work in India, which was the last phase of her great life, I would like to say something about her outstanding gifts. First and foremost, she was a fighter. Dash, courage, initiative; these characterised her. But she was also intuitive and far-sighted. With a twinkle in her eye, she used to repeat to me these words from the Gita:

“Yoga is skill in action”

The second great saying which she stated more than once to be her watch-word and inspiration is from the Upanishads:

“Fearlessness is the true Brahman”.



## CHAPTER IV

### MRS. BESANT ENTERS POLITICS—1913

I have already referred in Chapter II to Mrs. Besant's book "England, India and Afghanistan" in which she said *inter alia* that the answer to British mis-rule in India was self-government to India in slow stages and she also suggested the liquidation of the Indian Princely States. Mrs. Besant knew the problem and she knew the answer in 1879.

Then in 1903, we find a clear statement of the ideals which ever after animated her: "India must be governed on the basis of Indian feelings, Indian traditions, Indian thoughts, and Indian ideals. I dream of the time when India, England, Australia and Canada will all join in the making of a common empire—then India's children will bring their priceless treasures to the enriching of that Empire".

One may ask how, holding these views in 1879 and 1903, Mrs. Besant waited ten years more before advancing openly into the field of active politics. I will let Mrs. Besant give her answer as to why she abstained from political work during the period 1893 to 1912, and took it up only in 1913:

"Some of my good friends wonder why I work in the Political field, which for some years I left entirely. The answer must be a little bit of autobiography. I left it, because H. P. Blavatsky wished it. She thought, and thought rightly, that under the new conditions into which I entered when I became her pupil in the Divine Wisdom, it was necessary for me to devote myself to the mastering of the Theosophical standpoint, to the adjustment of the focus of the mental and emotional eyes to the new Light. Socialist as she declared herself to be—of the Socialism of Love and not of hate—she would not have me teach Socialism, until I had seen, how in the agelong evolution of mankind, the socialism of child-peoples, under an autocracy of Wisdom and Love, had necessarily passed away—exqui-

sitely beautiful and happiness-giving as it was—to make way for the struggles, the antagonisms, the wars in which adolescent Nations hewed their ways to Individualism and self-reliance. In the old Pythagorean way, she imposed on me silence on the subjects I cared for most, to which my public life had been devoted. She did well. For my old crude views were thrown into the fire of silence, and nothing was lost of the gold that they contained: that remained. She had learned in the wild days of the French Revolution the danger of such views among a people starving and ignorant, and she knew that in silence wisdom grows.

“Gradually, over here in India, I studied India’s past, and learned how great had been her people’s liberty in ancient days. In the early nineties I saw the Panchayat system at work, that I had read about, and found it wise. From time to time I gave a lecture on the problems of National life, and in England, now and again, I lectured on England’s neglected duties to India, and on the place of coloured races in the Empire, on their grievances, recalling old studies, when I had published a strong attack on England’s dealings with India, the black story of Clive and Hastings, and the tyrannies and wrongs. Hotly had I written also on England and Afghanistan, protesting against the invasion and England’s policy, against English policy in Egypt and towards Arabia. The study of those days remained, and laid the ground work for the future. For all the love for India, and the sympathy with her wrongs, and the knowledge of her sufferings, of her awakening in the eighties, and her struggles, the work for her with Charles Bradlaugh, the meeting with the Congress deputations, and with Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji in his election fight—as he reminded me the other day—all this flowered when I first touched Indian soil into the intense devotion for the Motherland which has animated me ever since. But all my first years of work went to the uplifting of eastern faiths, and especially of Hinduism—the work that had the honour of being condemned by Sir Valentine Chirol, as helping Nationalism—as indeed it did, for all great National movements in India are rooted in religion; as witness the religious movement before Shivaji and the Maratha

Confederacy; and the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society, preparing the road for the National Movement, and the nourishing thereof by Swami Vivekananda. Then came the educational work, and the lectures to the Hindu College students, and the inspiring of them with Patriotism, with devotion to the Motherland, the experience of the treatment of my Indian friends by Anglo-Indians, the meeting with Mr. Gokhale, the sad viceroyalty of Lord Curzon, the shock of Surat, the wrath of my Bengali friends over the partition and my sympathy with them, the anarchical troubles, the saving of boys from the police, and so on and so on, till I knew the time had come for letting my tongue speak freely that which had been burning in my heart, and to which all led up—the Freedom of the Motherland, and dignity of an Indian Nation self-ruled. To have a share in the winning of that Freedom, a share however small—what greater gift could come into hands which fold themselves in the cry of homage: Vande Mataram.”

Then furthermore, to come back to Geoffrey West's question: How did Dr. Besant take to active political work, this is her answer: “It was in 1913 that I first came into direct conscious touch with the Rishi Agastya, the Regent of India in the Inner Government. He desired me to form a small band of people, who were brave enough to defy wrong social customs, such as premature marriage. This was done and carrying out his wishes I gave some lectures that autumn on social reform published under the title of “Wake Up, India”.

“These prepared the way for the desired political reform and this was started in the same year by the resolve to begin a weekly newspaper, *The Commonweal*, in January 1914. To guide me in its conduct I was summoned to Shamballa, where still abide the King and his three Pupils, the ‘Four Kumaras’ of the Indian Scriptures, He the Eldest. Then I was given what I always call my Marching Orders:—“You will have a time of trouble and danger. I need not say. Have no fear. But have no anxiety. Do not let opposition become angry. Be firm, but not provocative. Press steadily the preparation for the coming changes and claim India's place in the Empire. The end will be a Great Triumph. Do not let it be stained by excesses.

Remember that you represent in the outer world the Regent, who is My Agent. My Hand will be over you and My Peace with you!”.

These words—her Marching Orders—marked out the policy Annie Besant followed and that is the main reason why Mrs. Besant whilst fighting for Indian freedom, held strongly that she should remain within the British Commonwealth. This was possible by winning Dominion Status. This meant the avoidance of a War of Colour; of Asia against Europe. It meant the peace of the world.

The following statement of policy appeared in the initial number of “The Commonweal”, the news-weekly first founded by Dr. Besant in 1914 to help her political work in India:—

### *Our Policy*

First and foremost, to hold a free platform for the expression of varied opinions on religious, educational, social and political problems, so that burning questions in all parts of the world may be thrashed out, and truth elicited by thoughtful discussion.

The editorial policy regards the four great functions of human life—belonging to the Spirit, the Mind, the Emotions, and the Body—as being different expressions of our life and as therefore closely inter-related. They form the four great departments of National Reform in every country and any antagonism between them, nay, any mutual coldness or indifference, throws the whole Body Politic out of health.

In India, this isolation is peculiarly mischievous, because as Mr. A. O. Hume pointed out in 1885: “The earnest and unselfish labourers for progress in this country constitute but an infinitesimal fraction of the population, a fraction that becomes absolutely inappreciable if further subdivided: “We stand, then, for Union among all workers in the National Cause, and ask only to be allowed to serve it in any of the four great departments.

In Religious Reform we stand for individual liberty and mutual respect, regarding all religions as ways to God, and recognizing the religious consciousness, not any other authority, as the Inner Ruler of each. We regard anti-religion and superstition as the fruits of ignorance, to be removed in the one

case by evidence, and in the other by explanation. We refuse to admit that any religion is a ground for the possession of social or political advantages, and ask that while all should be protected in their liberty none should be treated as privileged.

In Educational Reform we plead for flexibility, for the lessening of the number of examinations, and the over-pressure caused by too early specialization; for the encouragement of initiative both in teachers and pupils; for attention to physical, moral and religious culture as well as to intellectual; for the lowering of fees; and the increase of the number of schools and colleges; for the encouragement of the classical languages of India and of the vernaculars; for the wider spread of technical and artistic instruction; for the education of girls and of the masses; and, generally, for universal education on National lines, with an open path from primary schools through higher schools to the Universities.

In Social Reform we are in favour of foreign travel, of co-operation, and of the uplifting of the depressed classes; of the abolition of child-marriage, the seclusion of women, the colour bar, and the caste system.

In Political Reform we aim at the building up of complete Self-Government from village councils, through district and municipal boards and provincial legislative assemblies to a National Parliament, equal in its powers to the legislative bodies of the self-governing Colonies, by whatever name these may be called; also at the direct representation of India in the Imperial Parliament, when that body shall contain all representatives of the self-governing States of the Empire. All measures that tend in this direction we shall support, and all that retard it we shall oppose. We recognise the National Congress and the non-official members of representative bodies as voicing the will of India. We claim an open path for Indians to every post in their native land, as promised by the Proclamation of 1858, and the abolition of every law that places them in a position inferior to that enjoyed by the English. We ask that capacity and high character shall determine all appointments to office and that colour and religion shall be entirely disregarded as qualifications.

One thing that lies very near to our heart is to draw Great

Britain and India nearer to each other, by making known in Great Britain something of Indian movements and of the men who will influence from here the destinies of the Empire. England will listen eagerly to the views of the coming men of India, of whom, at present, she knows scarcely anything. The views of the English educated men, who are the voice of India in the present as they are her hope in the future, are but little known to the people of Great Britain. Yet for the sake of both nations it is vital that these should be as well known there as the leading men of England are known here . . . The ignorance of the real India is abysmal, and therefore the interest in her is sluggish. We would fain present a living picture of the true India, the India panting for liberty, aspiring to self-Government, and yet so patient and so helpful, that England may understand and sympathize.

The greater part of the above policy is intended to serve Indian reform, but we shall advocate the spirit of these reforms everywhere, and shall seek to draw together men and women of goodwill in every land.

Bad principles and bad methods will be opposed editorially, but if a person of standing in the community considers it necessary to attack anyone individually, the criticism must be signed by the writer.

We shall try to place on record any utterances which guide, cheer, and invigorate, any great ideals proclaimed by the prophets of our time.

We would fain be the voice of the dumb, the defender of the oppressed, the reformer of evil, the upholder of righteousness. It is a great ambition; but "it is better to try nobly and to fail, than ignobly not to try at all."

Annie Besant, Editor.

Amongst the regular British contributors to "The Commonwealth" were H. N. Brailsford and Major David Graham Pole.

On April 3, 1914, Annie Besant delivered a lecture on 'National Education' at the Gaiety Theatre. I was thrilled like the rest of the audience. This was my first vivid experience of her great oratorical powers. She spoke on this occasion, as she did during the succeeding years, with a rich tone and clear enunciation, in perfect plain diction, with an occasional gesture, working out a logical theme to a fine peroration. Her audiences were

fascinated by her intellectual and oratorical power; without a pause for word, without a note and without the use of felicitous phraseology and figurativeness.

On April 4, 1914, just before she sailed for England, she initiated me as a member of the Theosophical Society. This gave me an opportunity of shaking hands with her as she gave me her blessings. This I have always considered the most important day of my life. In London, in April and May, in the Queen's Hall lectures, she said, thinking in terms of the coming war: "England's need is India's opportunity". "The price of India's loyalty is India's Freedom", and "Strike the metal when the iron is hot".

On July 11, 1914, Mrs. Besant returned to India (Bombay). She bought the "Madras Standard" founded in 1841 and changed its name to "New India". She realised that a daily newspaper along with the weekly "Commonweal" was essential for creating a healthy public opinion in favour of Home Rule. On 14th July, 1914, 1,100 copies of "New India" were printed, and within a month i.e. on August 15th, the number increased to 5,000.

Soon after their return from South Africa, in March, 1915, Gandhiji and Kasturba called on Mrs. Besant at her home in the Theosophical Headquarters, Adyar. Mrs. Besant gave a tea party in their honour under the Banian tree, at which over 200 guests from Madras and Adyar were present. This was, however, not the first meeting which Gandhiji had with Mrs. Besant, for as already stated in an earlier chapter, he had called on Mme. Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant in 1889 when he was studying in England for his Barrister's examination. Soon after he met Mrs. Besant at Adyar, he made a Press statement to the effect that he was thunder-struck and horror-struck on seeing flowers on Mrs. Besant's desk and roses in the Theosophical Headquarters and wondered what Mrs. Besant who was considered a Yogi had to do with roses and other flowers! Lala Lajpat Rai strongly protested against Gandhiji's reaction against flowers and criticised him and he asked what did Gandhiji understand of Yogis and Yoga?

Mrs. Besant saw that the Indian National Congress could make very little progress and would be ineffective in bringing pressure on the British Government, because of the split in the Congress circles since the Surat session of the Congress in 1907

was still unhealed and the extremists as they were called were kept out of the Congress, and the Congress was under the control of the "Moderates" with Pherozshah Mehta, the Lion of Bombay, and the uncrowned King of India as their leader. Before the Congress met at Madras in 1914, Mrs. Besant and several others came down to discuss matters with Mr. Gokhale. Negotiations with Mr. Tilak's party went on at the same time and there was a talk of a Round Table Conference between the Extremists and the Moderates. H. P. Mody in his Biography of Pherozshah Mehta says that Pherozshah kept himself aloof and disapproved of Gokhale's talks with the leaders on the other side. More than ever he felt convinced of the undesirability of union with a party whose policy he condemned and whose methods he distrusted. The talks came to nothing and Gokhale blamed Tilak for the failure of the talks. Nothing daunted Mrs. Besant from continuing her effort at unity at the Madras Congress. When her amendment of the Constitution was referred by the Madras Congress to a Committee, Pherozshah Mehta had decided on having the next session in Bombay. He was anxious to put an end once and for all to the manoeuvres which had been going on for some years to effect a compromise which he regarded as mischievous, and he was confident that his personality and his immense influence in Bombay would carry everything through as he wanted. With his passing away a few weeks before the holding of the session, the way was made smooth for the amendment.

Mrs. Besant sought an interview with Pherozshah Mehta in July, 1915. Pherozshah agreed to meet her in Poona. But a few days before the appointed day of the meeting, Mrs. Besant suggested in a Press statement that Lala Lajpat Rai should be the President of the Congress Session to be held in Bombay in December, 1915. Pherozshah was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Reading of Mrs. Besant's suggestion of Lajpat Rai being made the President, he immediately telegraphed to Mrs. Besant cancelling the appointment on grounds of ill-health! Pherozshah wanted Sir Satyendra Sinha, ex-Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council (later Lord Sinha, Under Secretary of State for India) to be the President. Within two or three months, a month and a half before the Congress was held, Pherozshah died on 5th November, 1915.



On 17th November, 1915, my brother, Jamnadas, Umar Sobani and Shankerlal Banker, started a Weekly "Young India". Jamnadas and K. M. Munshi were the first editors. The paper was to support Mrs. Besant's policy.

Lord Willingdon thoroughly disapproving of the Besantine policy brought pressure on Jamnadas through Sir Shapurji Broacha, a great friend of our family, to stop the paper. Jamnadas successfully resisted this attempt of Lord Willingdon and the paper continued under his editorship till July 1919, Munshi having resigned his joint editorship after some months, owing to differences of opinion with Shankerlal Banker. Jamnadas then went to England with the National Home Rule League Delegation, and Shankerlal Banker and Umar Sobani handed over the paper to Gandhiji. Gandhiji became the editor of "Young India"—later known as "Harijan".

My first ever letter published in the Press dates from this time—1915. I suggested that Winston Churchill, then a Liberal and a Cabinet Minister under Prime Minister Asquith, be appointed as Viceroy and Governor-General of India in place of Lord Hardinge on the latter's giving up his office at the end of his term. I wonder what turn the History of India would have taken if Asquith had acted on my suggestion instead of appointing Lord Chelmsford as Hardinge's successor!

Mrs. Besant attended the Bombay Congress and B. G. Horniman as Editor of the "Bombay Chronicle" under the control of "Moderates" (Chairman of the Board of Directors Pherozshah Mehta) praised Mrs. Besant editorially for her efforts at unity. At this Bombay Congress Session, with the Past of India in her memory and its Future in her imagination, Mrs. Besant announced the Present; she stood for an immediate uncompromising demand for Home Rule for India. In doing so, she shocked the Past and received from it through the lips of its representative, the President of the Session—Sir Satyendra Sinha—the title of "Impatient Idealist".

Against this statement of Sinha—calling her an impatient idealist Mrs. Besant called a private meeting in 1915 in Bombay at China Baug and submitted her plan for the starting of a Home Rule League with the object of attaining complete Home Rule for India. She was not afraid to use the phrase Home Rule although many people were startled by it as it recalled

the violent Home Rule Movement of Ireland under Parnell. The people who attended the meeting were divided into two groups (1) her followers and friends and (2) others, afraid of the formation of the new movement who insisted that the Congress alone should take up the work. She agreed to wait. Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, was at that time seriously considering a forward move for India based on Lord Willingdon's scheme for further reforms. But as soon as he read the mild speech of the Congress President Sinha, he laid aside all thought of going ahead with reforms in India saying India could wait till after the war. And so the British Government shelved the Indian issue.

Mrs. Besant saw that the Congress passed at its four day Session excellent resolutions, and eloquent speeches were made by the upper-middle class stalwarts and after these four days, nothing further was done till the Congress met again one year later. The Congress consisted mainly of highly successful lawyers and doctors and hardly any businessmen joined its ranks. Mrs. Besant with her political experience of England saw that this state of affairs would not help India and she made up her mind that the extremists under the leadership of Tilak should be brought under the Congress. She wanted to revivify the Congress and she thought that the one way to do it was by starting a new organization—the Home Rule League. She wrote to Sir William Wedderburn and Dadabhai Naoroji, then 95 and living a retired life at Versova. Wedderburn rebuffed her as he thought that Mrs. Besant's movement would weaken the Congress. Other 'Moderate' leaders like Sir Dinshaw Wachha, five years older than Mrs. Besant, were equally frightened because they knew of her speed of work.

Dinshaw Wachha wrote to Dadabhai protesting against his acceptance of the Presidentship of Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League. "We do not approve of the methods of Mrs. Besant who late in the day has come forward to support the Congress movement..... We are alarmed at the way in which she is going about on her own responsibility, supported from behind by the extremists..... it is a distinct menace to the peaceful progress of the country."

Dadabhai did not take this lying down and immediately replied to Wachha :

“Every theory of suspicion should be demonstrated like a theorem in geometry before he could act on it. In this particular case, he saw no reason to discountenance a movement, full of promise for the country's good, merely because his friends suspected that its promoters would work in a manner prejudicial to the Congress.”

Dadabhai Naoroji welcomed Annie Besant's move and promised help. She visited Dadabhai in his home at Versova, but this did not come to much except as a moral support as Dadabhai was now too old for any active work.

Incidentally, with pardonable pride, I may mention that I shook hands with Sir Henry Cotton and Sir William Wedderburn in January, 1905—I was twelve then—when they attended a Reception held on the occasion of my eldest brother's marriage. And I shook hands with Dadabhai Naoroji in June, 1916, on the day he received the LL.D. Degree from the Bombay University.

I met Pherozshah Mehta twice in 1912 at his Chambers. I came into closer contact with Sir Dinshaw Wachha in 1921 in connection with anti-non-co-operation movement.

## CHAPTER V

### MRS. BESANT PREPARES GROUND FOR HOME RULE, 1915

- (i) "INDIA: A NATION"
- (ii) "HOW INDIA WROUGHT FOR FREEDOM"
- (ii) "MRS. BESANT INTERNED".

IN 1915, was published Mrs. Besant's "India: A Nation". She ends her prefatory note: "I dare to claim an intimacy of knowledge and an identity of sentiment which qualify me for stating, as far as may be in such brief compass, the case for "India: A Nation". There is a masterly foreword to this book by C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, our elder statesman today at 85 but only 34 then. In this foreword he shows great wisdom and insight into the problems of India which India would have to tackle during the coming generations. Mrs. Besant sums up this book:

"I sum up this little book, which seeks to justify India as a Nation claiming her freedom, with an appeal I wrote in "New India", a daily paper, at the close of some articles on Self-Government. It puts, as strongly as I can put it, India's appeal to England:

"O English Nation! Great and free and proud. Can not you see? Cannot you understand? Cannot you realise that your Indian brothers feel now as you would feel if a foreigner ruled in your land? That to be a stranger in your own country, an alien in your own land, with no rights save those given by grace of a Government not your own, your inferiority taken for granted, your capacities weighed in alien scales, and measured by the wand of another Nation—you could not bear such a state, such an outlook. India is patient, as you would not be. She does not want to break the link; she wants to remain part of the Empire; but an equal part, a self-governing Community, standing on a level with the Self-Governing Dominions. Is this passionate longing sedition? Is this ineradicable hope, treason, You dare

not say so, you, who bred Hampden, and Sidney, and Milton; you whose glory is your Freedom; you, who boast of your Empire as an Empire of the Free. Who dared to ask you if you were fit for freedom? Charles I asked it. James II asked it. History records the answer that you gave.

"What does India want? She wants everything that any other nation may claim for itself. To be free in India, as the Englishman is free in England. To be governed by her own men, freely elected by herself. To make and unmake Ministries at her will. To carry arms; to have her own Army, her own Navy, her own volunteers. To levy her own taxes; to make her own budgets, to educate her own people; to irrigate her own lands, to mine her own ores; to mint her own coin; to be a Sovereign Nation within her own borders, acknowledging the paramount power of the Imperial Crown, and sending her sons to the Imperial Council. There is nothing to which any man can aspire in his own land from which the Indian must be shut out here.

"A large claim, you say. Does the Englishman ask less for himself in England? If yes, what is there strange that an Indian should ask the same for himself in India? What is the radical difference between them, which should make an Indian 'content' to be a thrall? It is not the "angle of vision" that needs changing. It is the eye, purified from pride and prejudice, that can see clearly, and the heart, purged from arrogance, that can beat with healthy strokes.

"England and India hand-in-hand. Yes, that is our hope, for the world's sake. But that it may be so, justice must replace inequality; for India can never be at rest, till she is free".

Also in 1915 she published a series of articles in the "Commonweal" entitled "How India Wrought for Freedom". These articles were later published in a book of 700 pages entitled "How India Wrought for Freedom" with the sub-title "The Story of National Congress told from the Official Records." (1885-1914).

In the Foreword, Mrs. Besant says: "Little is needed to explain the purpose of this book. It is a plain story of India's constitutional struggle for Freedom, a story so pathetic in its patience, so strong in its endurance, so far-seeing in its wisdom,

that it is India's justification — if any justification can be needed for asserting the right to Freedom — for her demand for Home Rule.

The younger generation are impatient under the repetition of disregarded demands and they are right. The time has come for the definite agitation for Home Rule, to continue till it is granted. But they are wrong if they fail to recognise that these thirty years of work alone make it possible that the full demand for Freedom can now be effectively made. And they are doubly wrong if they are not grateful to those builders of the Indian Nation, who, when all was dark around them, believed in the dawning of the Day. They have laid the foundation on which their youngers can build. Homage then to the veterans, living still with us here, and living in the world beyond. That the younger generation may know how splendidly they wrought, this book is written.

I fearlessly place this volume before the public, as a proof of India's fitness for Home Rule. The grasp of the questions dealt with, the sagacity of the remedies proposed for poverty and misrule, the sobriety of the claims urged, the knowledge of, and the sympathy with, the sorrows of the people, prove how much better off India would be under Self-Rule than under other-Rule. Let any unprejudiced student turn over the Resolutions passed by the Congress during thirty years, and see how it laid bare the popular suffering, and how it pointed with unerring finger to the causes of that suffering — the drain of Indian wealth to England, the exorbitant cost of the alien rule, the ever-increasing military expenditure, the sacrifice of Indian industries, the land-tax ever rising and condemning the peasantry to perpetual indebtedness; and to a hopeless poverty and semi-starvation that have no parallel in any other civilised Nation. It is these facts, covered up by officials, but laid bare by the Congress, which make Home Rule necessary, if a catastrophe is to be avoided.....

May this book help Britain to understand the shame of her autocratic rule in India, her broken pledges, her selfishness, her preference of her own to India's interests. May it help India to realise her duty to Herself."

In September, 1915, she wrote about the War in Europe: "There is no break as yet in the dark cloud of War that lowers

over Europe, lit up only with flashes that herald the bursting of shells. From every side comes grim news of unparalleled slaughter, and the oldest scientific brains in each country are dedicated to the ghastly work of wrenching from Nature new ways of killing her children. And what is the lesson that Humanity is to learn from this welter of horror and of death? Surely that intellect unilluminated by Love must ultimately bring our race to naught..... Knowledge and Love should walk hand-in-hand in evolution, for knowledge without love has no compass for its guiding, and love without knowledge may become a destroying torrent instead of a fertilising stream. Hence is Wisdom — the blending of Love and Knowledge — the higher achievement of the man who stands on the threshold of Immortality."

Early in 1916, Mrs. Besant asked Gandhiji to work with her in the Home Rule League. Gandhiji refused saying that he did not want to embarrass the British Government who were fighting the Germans, but that he would wait till the end of the war as he was confident that the British Government feeling grateful for India's help during the war would without difficulty introduce the necessary reforms and give power to Indians. Mrs. Besant told him that she knew her people better than Gandhiji and that unless the ground was prepared by the Indians the British Government would forget all about India's great service in the war. Gandhiji did not agree. Later events proved that Mrs. Besant was right and Gandhiji was wrong.

The Government were frightened of Mrs. Besant's political activities and her strong articles in "New India", and the Madras Government (Lord Pentland—Governor) demanded a security of Rs. 2,000/- from Mrs. Besant on 5th June, 1916, under the Press Act. This bracketting of Mrs. Besant with the violent seditionists against whom the Press Act had been aimed stirred hot feelings throughout the country. Further Lord Willingdon's Government in Bombay and later the C. P. Government (Sir Benjamin Robertson — Governor) passed prohibitory orders against Mrs. Besant, forbidding her from entering the Bombay Presidency and the Central Provinces.

But this unfair action by the three Provincial Governments gave a fillip to Mrs. Besant's agitation for Home Rule. Disappointed at this weak-kneed attitude of the Congress and seeing that it was not likely to move in the immediate future Mrs.

Besant started her Home Rule League in September, 1916. She did not get much popular support to start with, but she was able to start many branches with limited membership all over the Bombay Presidency. The membership was mainly confined to the Theosophical followers. In Bombay, the Home Rule League started with a membership of 70 of whom 68 were Theosophists and 2 non-Theosophists—Umar Sobani and Shankerlal Banker.

Five months earlier—April, 1916—Tilak had already started his Home Rule League in Poona. There was no rivalry between the two organizations and their leaders worked in harmony. In May, 1916, Mrs. Besant came to Poona, and with Tilak in the Chair, delivered a lecture on Home Rule. Tilak deliberately confined the activity of his Home Rule League to Western and Central India, and let Mrs. Besant operate freely in the rest of the country.

The Home Rule movement made an instantaneous impression on Jawaharlal. "The atmosphere became electric", he wrote many years later, "and most of us young men expected big things in the near future". He joined both the Home Rule Leagues, but worked mainly for Mrs. Besant's.

The Government of India's reaction to the Home Rule Movement quickly changed from derision to bewilderment and then to alarm. Sir Reginald Craddock, Home Member, was frightened. He said: "The position is one of great difficulty. The Moderate leaders can command no support among the vocal classes who are being led at the heels of Tilak and Besant. Home Rule is pressed for not so much as constitutional reforms now becoming due, but as the only salvation from innumerable wrongs and grievances under which India is suffering..... under cover of constitutional agitation, the minds of the people who read newspapers are being poisoned against the British Government".

This statement sums up the blindness of the British bureaucracy refusing to face facts and misunderstanding and misinterpreting every constitutional agitation as sedition.

The Government of India records show that the Provincial Governments frightened of Mrs. Besant's political activities were pressing the Central Government to give a clear lead on the policy to be adopted towards the Home Rule Movement. This



Lord Chelmsford declined to do and the Provincial Governments were left free to act as they thought fit.

At the Lucknow Congress which I attended as the delegate for the first time, Mrs. Besant's efforts at unity succeeded and Lokmanya Tilak attended the Congress after an absence of nine years, he having left it at the time of Surat split in 1907. Mrs. Besant, Jinnah, Chimanlal Setalvad and Lokmanya Tilak were the leaders who welcomed the Congress-League Scheme. Gandhiji was present but did not take any active part in the proceedings. He was biding his time. Jawaharlal Nehru also was a silent spectator.

On the morning when Sir Harcourt Butler, Lieut.-Governor of U.P., visited the Congress, Horniman, Editor of the "Chronicle", published in the *Bombay Chronicle*, a confidential letter by Lionel Curtis of the Round Table Group purporting to suggest that as a reward for the war services, the other self-governing dominions, Australia and New Zealand, Canada and South Africa should have control over India along with Great Britain. This coup on Horniman's part created a great stir in the Congress which thoroughly disapproved of this suggestion.

The Aga Khan had suggested privately to the British Government that India should be suitably rewarded by the British Government for her war services to the British Empire; and he said that every member of the British Empire — Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa would get something or the other after the defeat of the Germans, and he added that German East Africa (now Tanganyika) should be made a Colony of India. I must add that a large population of German East Africa were Khojas who acknowledged the Aga Khan as their Spiritual Head. It was India's good luck that the British did not act favourably towards Aga Khan's suggestion.

Major David Graham Pole who attended the Lucknow Congress wrote on 30th March, 1917, the following letter to the Hon. Sir Sankaran Nair, then Member for Education in the Viceroy's Executive Council:

"My dear Sir Sankaran,

I want to write to you at once about a most interesting meeting I had last night with Mr. Philip Kerr of the "Round Table". We dined together and had some three hours' talk, chiefly on India. Kerr is Secretary to Lloyd George, and

has travelled quite a good deal in different parts of the Empire. He is looked on as one of the coming men. His ideas with regard to India go further than I have ever heard expressed previously by any official. He is entirely for self-government for India, at the earliest possible opportunity. His ideas are:—

- (1) That in each Presidency there should be an electorate based broadly on literacy.
- (2) That the Governor of the Presidency should choose his Council as would be done by any Prime Minister here; but this Council must command the support of a majority of the electors.
- (3) That the Viceroy should have his Council chosen from the Presidency Councils and they again should, whether Indians or Europeans, have the support of the majority of the electors.

His idea would be then to say to the Viceroy and Governors practically that they are in India to rule as the Indians direct, in much the same way as is done in any of the other self-governing Dominions. He thinks the only man for us with fire and imagination is Lloyd George, and he believes that if the latter were relieved of some of the pressure of the war work, he would take it up and carry it through. Kerr thinks that we should do as much quiet work as we can, and arrange to get really good representative Indians over here to put their views before the people and this especially immediately after the war.

Kerr told me a good deal about Curtis who went out, I understand specially to endeavour to bring about such an understanding as would lead to an early measure of self-government, and unfortunately has fallen foul of the very people he wanted to help. His letter to Kerr of which so much was made at Congress time when I was in India, was of course very clumsily worded and never having been intended for publication conveyed to Indians entirely the opposite effect from what Curtis had intended to be conveyed here. It is unfortunate, but Kerr believes that the Indians will, before long be so assured of Curtis's good intentions and good work, that they will readily acknowledge that their first information was mistaken.

I am sorry to write so long a letter, but I wanted to put this before you while it was still fresh in my mind. It certainly is good to know that we have a man like Kerr who is so willing and anxious to forward the ends we have so much at heart.

All good wishes,"

Mrs. Besant with her two colleagues, Arundale and Wadia, was interned in Ootacamund by the Government of Madras on 16th June, 1917. Lord Pentland had forfeited securities of 'New India' to the extent of Rs. 40,000/-.

Lord Pentland, the Governor of Madras, asked Mrs. Besant to see him on 16th June, 1917. Anticipating that this would lead to her internment, she wrote a message to the people of India and published it in "New India" of 15th June, 1917:

To My Brothers and Sisters in India

I wrote this to leave behind me, when I thought I was going to Ooty. Now, as I have to see H. E. the Governor tomorrow, I think it safer to print it today, lest I should be interned and unable to speak.

ANNIE BESANT

"These are the times that try men's souls." Thus spake one who faced the fiery furnace of trial, and who faltered neither in faith nor in courage. "It is ours today to face a powerful autocracy, determined to crush out all resistance to its will, and that will is to prevent India from gaining Self-Government, or Home Rule, in the Reconstruction of the Empire after the War.

"The National Congress has declared in conjunction with the All-India Muslim League, that India must be lifted from the position of a Dependency to that of an equal partner in the Empire. To that end they drafted a scheme of reforms, which proposed that the Legislative Councils should be much enlarged and elected on as broad a basis as possible with a four-fifths majority of elected members, and that control of taxation and expenditure — the power of granting or refusing supply — should be placed in the hands of this Legislative Council, so as to subordinate the Executive to the Legislative Council. This is the feature of the scheme specially selected by H. E. the Governor of Madras for reprobation, and although it had been planned — in consonance with the practice of civilized Nations — by the most

responsible public men in the country, and accepted by the great mass of popularly elected delegates at the Lucknow National Congress and the Muslim League, 1916, His Excellency was pleased to aver that no Indian with knowledge of affairs would endorse it, and this soon after it had been endorsed by Mr. Madhava Rao, C.I.E., late Dewan of Travancore, Mysore and Baroda.

"The difference of opinion between the Governor of Madras and the large majority of educated Indians is a small matter; but the resolution to crush Home Rule by force is a very serious one. It is practically proposed to strangle by violence the political educative propaganda the Congress ordered its own Committees, the Home Rule Leagues, and other similar public bodies to carry on. We are therefore faced by the alternative of disobeying the mandate of the country or that of the Governor of Madras, an alternative which has been faced in the past by all countries which suffer under autocracies, and which India—the last great civilized country to be subjected to autocracy, save those under the Central Powers in Europe—has now to face. For myself, as a member of the All-India Congress Committee, I elect to obey the mandate of the country, in preference to that of the Governor of Madras, which has no moral justification behind it, which outrages British law and custom, and imposes an unwarrantable, and, I believe, an illegal, restriction on the fundamental Rights of Man. I know that this resolution of mine, setting myself against the strongest autocracy in the world in the midst of a disarmed and helpless people, will seem to most an act of madness, but by such acts of madness Nations are inspired to resist oppression. Others will scoff at it as an easy martyrdom, deliberately courted; they have already done so, to discount it beforehand, they who would not face exclusion from Government House, let alone the loss of liberty, the seizure of property, and the exclusion from public life, which has been my one work and joy for forty-three years. When I was twenty-five I wrote, anonymously, my first Free-thought pamphlet, and within a year, as I refused to attend the Sacrament I had ceased to believe in, I was turned out by my husband from his home. I did not then, and do not now, blame him, for the position of a Vicar with a heretic wife was impossible, and his friends urged him to the step. At twenty-six, at the end of July, 1874, I

joined the National Secular Society for the first time heard Mr. Bradlaugh lecture on August 2, and received my certificate of membership and had an interview with him a day or two later. On August 30, I wrote my first article in the National Reformer, and continued to write in it regularly, till he died in 1891. My real public life dates from my first public lecture on "The Political Status of Women," for the Co-operative Institute in August, 1874.

"Since then my life has been given wholly to the service of the public, as I have seen service, so that the deprivation of the liberty to render service is the greatest loss that can befall me. I know that the selfish and the unpatriotic cannot realize this, but those who have a similar Dharma, they will understand. Apart from the joy of service, life has no attractions for me, save the happiness that flows from a few deep and strong personal attachments. To surrender liberty and touch with those I love is to me worse than death. But to live free and with them, a coward and dishonoured, a traitor to Dharma and to India, would be hell. I take the easier path.

Those who rob me of liberty will try to blacken me, in order to escape shame for themselves. The Defence of India Act was never intended to be used to prevent public political speech, free from all incitement to or suggestion of, violence, and accompanied with no disturbance of any kind. My paper could have been stopped by the Press Act, by forfeiture of security and confiscation of press. But the Government is afraid to face the High Court, which has already pronounced its former procedure to be illegal. An autocracy is ever afraid of law, and hence the Government takes the step of shutting me up — a cowardly course — and hopes to prevent any public protest by striking down all who resist it. The Defence of India Act is being used to suppress all political agitation of an orderly character, so that the Government may pretend to England that India is silent and indifferent.

Sir S. Subramania Aiyar's brave action, followed by those of the Hon. Mr. K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, the Hon. V. K. Ramanujachariar, Chairman of the Kumbakonam Municipality, the Hon. Mr. B. V. Narsimha Iyer, Dewan Bahadur L. A. Govindaraghaviah, Mr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Mr. Rangaswami Aiyar of Madurai, Public Prosecutor and Pleader, with the effec-

tive letter of Mr. N. Ramchandra Rao, defending the Congress and League scheme against the strictures of the Governor — these all show the spirit of Madras, and will, I feel sure, be followed by many others of this City, now scattered far and wide over the country, enjoying their well won holiday, and unconscious of what is being done so cleverly by the Executive in their absence. If any attempt be made to justify my internment by pretence of my entering into or cognisance of any conspiracy, or communication with the enemy, I fling the lie in the slanderer's teeth. I know that some post cards with my portrait, purporting to come from Germany and said to be seditious, have been sent to friends. I have been told of them, but have not seen a copy. They may have been fabricated in Germany, or by the C.I.D. here, but I have nothing to do with them.

If it be said that I have carried on "a campaign of calumny," which I utterly deny, the fault lies with Lord Pentland, who could, once again, have forfeited my security and confiscated my press. But then his Advocate-General would have had to prove it in Court and before the Privy Council, and that he could not do. It is easy for a Governor, if he has no scruples, to calumniate a person from the safe security of a Council meeting at Ooty, and then to lock up the calumniated. Such is the natural course of an irresponsible autocrat.

Such men, to protect themselves, as we saw in the case of Sir Reginald Craddock, having silenced their victims, proceed to blacken and defame them before the world. How else can they justify themselves? When the dry facts as to poverty, starvation, overtaxation, illiteracy, are stated, they are "calumny." To say that the average life period in India is 23.05 that in England it is 40, in New Zealand 60, is "calumny." To publish a table of literacy in England, Japan, Russia, Baroda, and British India is "calumny." To show that the raised assessment on land in one district was balanced that same year in the increased debt of the raiyats to the sowcars is "calumny". To show by these and many other facts that the autocracy in India is not even efficient is "calumny". To quote ancient books to show the state of the country in the pre-British days is "calumny" —if it shows widespread prosperity and wealth; if it tells of raids and wars, then it is history.

Let them talk as they will; they "come and go, imperma-

ment." But Lord Pentland — a good but weak man, driven into tyranny by strong and ruthless men, like Messrs. Gillman and Davidson, our real rulers — will have to answer for his actions before the Indian public, before the British Democracy, before history, which records the struggles for Liberty, and before God. Will his conscience be as clear as mine?

I hear, but gossip is unreliable, that to avoid internment I shall be told either to go to England or to promise to abstain from political speaking and writing. I shall do neither. I do not run away from a struggle into which I have led others, and leave them in the middle of the field. Our work has been wholly constitutional; there has been no threat, no act of violence; in nothing has the law been transgressed. We believed that we were living under the Crown of Great Britain, and had the constitutional right of speech and law-abiding agitation for reforms in the system of Government under which we live. Still, we were aware that we were living under an autocracy, which first punishes and then issues orders for bidding the act punished, and we took the risk; for the risk was personal, whereas the suppression of free speech means secret conspiracy leading to revolution, in which many suffer. I have often pointed out that in India Liberty and property can be confiscated by Executive Order, and that therefore no man is safe; an Executive Order forfeited my security and deprived me of another Rs. 10,000. Now an Executive Order deprives me of my liberty. It is well. The world will learn how India is governed, and that while England asks India to fight against autocracy in Europe, and drains her of her capital to carry on the War, England's agents use all the methods of autocracy in India, in order to deceive the world into the idea that India is well governed and is content.

What is my crime, that after a long life of work for others, publicly and privately, I am to be dropped into the modern equivalent of the Middle Age oubliette-internment? My real crime is that I have awakened in India the National self-respect, which was asleep, and have made thousands of educated men feel that to be content with being "a subject race" is a dishonour. Mr. Lloyd George said truly that Ireland's discontent was not material, it was due to the wounding of National self-respect, and therefore could not be cured even by prosperity. I have

made them feel that to live under an autocracy, to dance attendance on Governors and Collectors, to be ruled and taxed without their own consent, to be told that they were not fit to govern themselves, to see young Englishmen in the Public Services of their country preferred to experienced Indians, to have highly-paid Imperial Services for foreigners lording it over less well-paid Provincial Services for "natives"—"natives" being the natural owners of their own land, that these and a hundred other like things were intolerable and should be ended. Life does not consist in money and clothes, in motor-cars and invitations to Government Houses. Life consists of Liberty, in self-respect, in honour, in right ambition, in patriotism, and in noble living. Where these are absent, life is not worth living. It is not the life of a man, in the image of God, but of a brute, well fed by his owner.

Thanks to Sir S. Subramania's splendid courage, he and I stand together in this fight for freedom, with the advantage, not shared by the other members of our gallant little band — who have proved their right to be called leaders by springing forward to lead in the moment of peril — that he is well known in England through his work as High Court Judge, and the great praise of him by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; and he is also personally known to His Majesty the King-Emperor. No one will believe that such man is an inconsiderate and headlong agitator. His arrest, if made, will draw English attention to the state of affairs here. I also have the advantage of being personally well known in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Holland, Australia, Italy, Canada, New Zealand, America, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, in the first five personally as a fighter for liberty of speech in political and social reforms, as a Trade Unionist, a member of "the old International," a Radical and a Socialist, and in the rest by reputation; in all as a religious teacher. In Russia I am known as a member of the old "Friends of Russia", associated with Russian exiles in England, in the days of Stepniak. None will feel surprised that I am carrying on the old fight for freedom, here in India. Unless the Government can muzzle the whole Indian press as well as Reuter, the news of my internment will run round the world, and proclaim how England, fighting for liberty in Europe, and posing as its champion, is more false to liberty in India than she



is even in Ireland, is in India an autocracy, naked and unashamed, under which neither liberty of person and speech nor possession of property is safe, being at the mercy of "Executive Orders," and these are discriminating, striking at one and leaving another; some can be terrorized; some can be bribed; threats are used to the timid; offices or titles are dangled before the ambitious. And we are to be punished because we stand by the principles for which England stands in Europe, and ask peacefully and constitutionally for responsible Self-Government which we work for on law-abiding lines.

For me, I have worked for India in India for nearly 25 years, and for 14 years before that in England; my "England, India and Afghanistan" is as outspoken as "India — a Nation." In India, I have worked for the old religions and for Islam and against conversion to Christianity; I have worked for education — the Central Hindu College, now the centre of the Hindu University, and the Theosophical Educational Trust are my witness; I have worked for social reform on religious lines; I am still working for all of these, and in addition for that which alone can make these safe, for Home Rule for India, Self-Government within the Empire.

Only by winning Home Rule can India secure her material prosperity; only thus can she save what is left of her trade, her industries and her agriculture, improve them and reap the results of her own labour. The descent of Lever Bros. to capture the soap industry, crushing the nascent factories in Bombay, Madras and the U.P., is a prophecy of what will happen after the War with Imperial Preference — the fierce competition of British capitalists on Indian soil with Indian industries. It is said that the Government is going to sell their soap factory, created with Indian money, to Lever Bros., thus making it a British industry, but that I cannot believe. Lever Bros., is strong enough to crush the Indian manufacturers without Government help.

Indian labour is wanted for the foreign firms. Indian capital is being drained away by the War Loan — which is to bring no freedom to India, if the autocracy has its way. Indian taxation to pay the interest on the War Loan will be crushing. When that comes, India will realize why I have striven for Home Rule after the War. Only by that can she be saved from ruin, from

becoming a Nation of coolies, toiling for the enrichment of others.

I write plainly, for this is my last word. I go into enforced silence and imprisonment, because I love India and have striven to arouse her before it was too late. It is better to suffer than to consent to wrong. It is better to lose liberty than to lose honour.

I am old, but I believe that I shall see India win Home Rule before I die. If I have helped ever so little to the realization of that glorious hope, I am more than satisfied.

GOD SAVE INDIA

VANDE MATARAM"

THIS INTERNMENT of Mrs. Besant sounded the death-knell of the mighty British Empire. What Mrs. Besant could not have achieved in 20 years, her internment achieved just in one day. Home Rule became a live issue for the whole of India. Prominent Indian politicians who had kept away from the Home Rule League, joined it and took up its leadership: M. A. Jinnah in Bombay and Tej Bahadur Sapru, Motilal Nehru and C. Y. Chintamani in U.P. and C. R. Das in Calcutta. Jinnah brought the whole legal profession in Bombay to the Home Rule League, among others D. N. Bahadurji, Bhulabhai Desai, M. R. Jayakar and K. M. Munshi. Horniman also joined the League at this stage. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar and Jawaharlal Nehru had already joined the League in 1916 and were its active members. P. K. Telang took up the editorship of New India in place of Mrs. Besant and during the three months of the internment, he and C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar wrote most of the editorial articles.

Jawaharlal Nehru says in his autobiography:

"Mrs. Besant's internment also resulted in my father and other moderate leaders joining the Home Rule League. Some months later most of these Moderate members resigned from the League. My father remained in it and became the president of the Allahabad Branch.

"Gradually, my father had been drifting away from the orthodox Moderate position. His nature rebelled against too much submission and appeal to an authority which ignored us and treated us disdainfully. But the old extremist leaders did not attract him; their language and methods

jarred upon him. The episode of Mrs. Besant's internment and subsequent events influenced him considerably, but he still hesitated before definitely committing himself to a forward line. Often he used to say in those days that moderate tactics were no good, but nothing effective could be done till some solution for the Hindu-Moslem question was found. If this was found, then he promised to go ahead with the youngest of us. The adoption by the Congress at Lucknow in 1916 of the Joint Congress-League Scheme, which had been drawn up at a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in our house, pleased him greatly as it opened the way to a joint effort, and he was prepared to go ahead then even at the cost of breaking with his old colleagues of the Moderate group."

"C. R. Das protested vigorously against Mrs. Besant's internment. At a meeting of the Indian Association in Calcutta he said: "I do not think the God of Humanity was crucified only once. Tyrants and oppressors have crucified humanity again and again. Every outrage on humanity is a fresh nail driven through his sacred flesh."

17th June, 1917 was a red letter day for me. It was the beginning of my political career. Jinnah became the President of the Bombay Branch of the Home Rule League and he selected me as its Treasurer. Umar Sobani and Shankerlal Banker were the Secretaries. Umar Sobani, Shankerlal Banker, Indulal Yajnik, Jamnadas Dwarkadas and myself (I was the juniormost) approached Gandhiji for assistance to get Mrs. Besant out. It was then that Gandhiji first talked of Passive Resistance in India. He wanted 100 volunteers, true and faithful, to walk from Bombay to Coimbatore (about 1,000 miles) where Dr. Besant was transferred from Ootacamund for internment and he said that this would help in her release: We were sceptical about this kind of political agitation and were disappointed at Gandhiji's unhelpful evasive reply. Gandhiji did not take any active part in the agitation for her release and he *did not tell us that he had written a private letter to the Private Secretary to Lord Chelmsford, on 10th July. This was the amazing letter:*

".....In my humble opinion the internments are a big blunder. Madras was absolutely calm before then, now it is

badly disturbed. India as a whole had not made common-cause with Mrs. Besant, but now she is in a fair way towards commanding India's identity with her methods..... I myself do not like much in Mrs. Besant's methods. I have not liked the idea of political propaganda being carried on during the war. In my opinion our restraint will have been the best propaganda. And no one could deny Mrs. Besant's great sacrifice and love for India or desire to be strictly constitutional. But the whole country was against me..... The Congress was trying to capture Mrs. Besant. The latter was trying to capture the former. Now they have almost become one....."

It is hardly necessary to comment on Gandhiji's letter. Gandhiji in this letter refers to "our restraint" putting Government and himself on the same side, and he does not like the internment of Mrs. Besant, not because it was fundamentally wrong, but because it brought Mrs. Besant and the Congress together! It is not surprising that Gandhiji did not take his friends into his confidence about this letter and did not hand over a copy of this letter to the Press for publication. Fortunately, in the interests of History, this letter is recorded in the Government of India files of that period.

Dr. Subramania Aiyar, ex-Chief Justice of Madras and Vice-President of the Theosophical Society, wrote a letter to President Wilson and it was smuggled out of India in spite of heavy censorship. Dr. Subramania Aiyar drew President Wilson's attention to the British misrule in India and to Mrs. Besant's internment without trial. President Wilson promptly acted on this letter and asked the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, to explain to him what was happening in India. The Government of India were greatly angered by this act of Sir Subramania Aiyar. Sir Subramania's letter to President Wilson had the desired effect. The United Kingdom could not afford to displease the U.S. and its President and ignore world opinion. They were forced to release Dr. Besant on September 17th.

Just before her release, the Secretary of State, Edwin S. Montague, made the following brief announcement in the House of Commons, on the 20th August:

"The policy of His Majesty's Government.....is that of increasing association of Indians in every Branch of the

administration, and gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realization of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire".

Mrs. Besant had brought India on the political map of the world. There was an immediate relaxation in the political tensions after three months of feverish excitement and agitation throughout the length and breadth of India.

It is relevant to quote here in full Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru's tribute, in August, 1924, to Mrs. Besant on the occasion of her completing 50 years of public service. In this statement a reference is made to the part he and Jinnah played in getting Mrs. Besant released:

"It is with a genuine sense of pleasure that I desire to pay my tribute, admiration, respect and, may I add, affection for Dr. Besant on her Golden Jubilee of fifty years of public life. It is exactly thirty years ago that, as an undergraduate, I saw her and heard her for the first time. Her wonderful eloquence produced an indelible impression on my mind, but I was not prepared to follow her. I was in full possession of the unlimited wealth of that dogmatism which is the monopoly of youth. It was the fashion for young men in those days to judge their institutions, social polity, philosophy and history by standards prescribed for us by the West. I judged her and her philosophy by those standards, and in common with many of my contemporaries I condemned her as a faddist. Even a few years later, when she started her great work at Benares and brought a large number of youths under her spell, it pleased me to criticise her, and, at times, even to denounce her as a spoiler of youth. Having read some of my carping criticisms in Indian papers, all the more virulent because of the safety of anonymity, she described her unknown critic as a Godless materialist. I thoroughly enjoyed the rebuke. Advancing years and closer contact have considerably softened down my views about her philosophy and interpretation of our religion though they have hitherto failed to make me a convert. I do not like to be described now as a Godless materialist, but at the same time, I should not enjoy the addition of the letters F.T.S. to the others that are usually

appended to my name, whether well-earned or otherwise. But despite the fact that I have been ungodly, and that she has been supremely Godly, I confess that, during the last fifteen years of my life, I have felt more and more drawn to her, until I can say that notwithstanding many differences between our points of view, her point of view in many things in our National life is one which has appealed to me most.

"Friendship and loyalty among friends would be intolerable if unanimity were a condition precedent. They are the more valued when there are some differences. She has the great gift of creating and fostering such friendships. I look upon it as one of the rare privileges of my life that she has been good enough, generous enough to admit to the circle of her friends. She has honoured me with repeated visits, and there was no guest more welcome than she, notwithstanding the fact that I have had generally to conform to her standards of punctuality and regularity, with occasional breaches of them, compensated for with profuse apologies on my side, and accepted by a smiling rebuke on hers.

"I can only give here just a few of my impressions of her. The one thing that has struck me most about her is her earnestness. She believes in what she says, and it is no easy task for anyone to dislodge her from her belief. Not only does she believe in what she says, but she acts on her beliefs with unconquerable perseverance and pertinacity. Her admirers, particularly among Theosophists, describe her as a thinker, but she does not belong to the race of thinkers whose thoughts are generally sterile. Between her thought and action there is very little distance. She conceived the idea of the revival of Hindu culture and it materialised in the shape of the Hindu College at Benares. That College, today, is the rallying centre for the best elements of Hindu thought and culture. It has expanded into a University. I do not wish to rob those who have worked for its expansion of the credit that belongs to them, but let no one rob Dr. Besant of the credit that is exclusively hers in founding and nursing the College, which has now grown into a University.

"In 1915, she conceived the idea of Home Rule for India. There was general unrest in the country. We were talking of reforms, and expansion of Councils, and swore by Swaraj, but our ideas were nebulous. Her clear-thinking gave concrete shape to our undefined and indefinite ideas, resulting in an organised movement for Home Rule for India. It was not considered quite safe and respectable before the Movement began, to use such direct language. Even if there was some clear thinking on our part, we so much qualified our ideas with elegant adjectives, adverse to the main idea, that it receded into the background. Her language was downright and her actions left no choice to her powerful critics but to lodge her safely in a place from which she could do no more mischief. That, at any rate, was what they said at the time. It is now seven years ago that I, one day, in Simla, suddenly called in company with Mr. Jinnah at the room of the Law Member of those days to discuss the question of her release. Very interesting conversation passed between Sir George Lowndes, Mr. Jinnah and myself. Telephone messages were sent to Lord Chelmsford. I refused to stand surety for her, not on any grounds of personal safety, but because I knew that no one in the world could stand surety for her. I also knew that the mistake had been discovered, and, surety or no surety, she was going to be released. I met her a few weeks later at Allahabad and went to receive her at the railway station, but refused to join the procession, as, by temperament, I am opposed to all processions, religious or political. Next morning, I conveyed to her a message from certain high quarters. She listened to me, but was a little cold. Apparently, I had been condemned by some who thought that I was backsliding. I have still with me contemporary memoranda of our conversations at Simla with the high and mighty of those days and with Dr. Besant at Allahabad, but the time is not yet for the world to know more. In less than a year's time the atmosphere cleared up, and drew us together again more closely.

"Of the intervening few incidents I shall make no mention. In February, 1920, she came and stayed with me at Delhi, a recent internee put up with the Member of the

Governor-General's Executive Council! It gave shocks of different kinds in different quarters. Some thought that it was not the right thing for me to have her under my roof. Others thought that she had been won over by the calculating Bureaucracy. The former suspicion was laid aside by Lord and Lady Chelmsford inviting her to lunch. For the latter, it has yet to be disproved. She then repeated her visits to me both at Delhi and Simla. I confess we freely discussed the situation. In September, 1922, when my official dissolution was a question of a few months, she came to Simla, and we discussed plans for the future. Of those plans I shall say nothing, as they are a matter of common knowledge now, but it is no secret in high quarters that both she and I were indiscreet enough to admit our plans to some people in Simla. If the *National Convention Movement* has not yet gained the necessary strength, it is due to the fault of those who will not appreciate its value, or who must necessarily feel startled at a new idea, and others are alarmed because she would again be in the field. If it gains strength and succeeds in the future, it will be due solely to her indomitable courage, her wonderful powers of organisation and her incurable optimism. Meanwhile, she has been bold enough to place her ideas before the English public.

"Her latest mission to England adds one more to the long list of services she has rendered to the country of her adoption. Special Correspondents of certain newspapers have been belittling her efforts and achievements in England. The Tory Press in England has either ridiculed her efforts or ignored her. All this was expected, nor was it expected that she would come back with the gift of Swaraj from the Labour Government. But those who are privileged to know something which does not appear in public print, know that she has succeeded. At least one thing she has unsettled — the non *possumus* attitude of certain people in high quarters in England. The success of her achievement can, at the present moment, only be measured by the amount of opposition her plans have evoked, and the length of Special Correspondents' letters to Indian papers. She lives and thrives in an atmosphere of opposition, but she has



nearly always conquered opposition, and her personal history may once again be repeated. Whatever spiritual peace she may have to present to her followers, the fact is that in politics she has been a restless soul. She has been a fighter. She fought in her youth, she fought in middle age and at an age when another person might be thinking of peace. This life or next, she is fighting with all the ardour of youth for her ideas of Liberty, Self-Respect, Self-Government for a country, which is not hers by birth but by adoption, and in the destiny of which she believes so completely that none can argue her out of that belief. It is joy for her friends to see her fight for the principles of life and liberty of India, it must also be an example to her hostile critics. I believe there is still charity enough, notwithstanding our many dissensions, which will move all of us, friends and foes alike, to wish this fighter more strength to her hand and success to her campaign."

Twenty days after her release — on 5th October — Mrs. Besant arrived at Allahabad and was received at the station among others, by Lokmanya Tilak, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Motilal Nehru, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Jawaharlal Nehru. The carriage in which Mrs. Besant was to be driven in the company of Tilak and Motilal to Anand Bhavan, was pulled by a party of young men through the streets of Allahabad, which were decorated with Home Rule flags, buntings and floral arches. In presenting the address to Mrs. Besant, Motilal said: "Two years ago, you said with the clear intuition of genius what the motherland needed.... You saw the inner hopes and aspirations in the hearts of the dumb, inarticulate millions of the people of this country.....".

Mrs. Besant replied briefly. Indian blood, she said, had soaked the soil, Flanders, Gallipoli, Egypt and Mesopotamia. The land that had welcomed Garibaldi, the land that had sheltered Mazzini, could not but give the same welcome to Indians who had fought for the same cause....." We shall join together under a free crown in a free Commonwealth of nations in which India shall shine as the sunshine in the East."

Equally grand was the reception which Bombay gave to her a few days later. Thousands participated in the procession from the station to her residence in Shanti Kunj, Pedder Road.

This was the most glorious hour of Mrs. Besant. She had reached the zenith of popularity in India. C. R. Das was anxious that Mrs. Besant should preside over the next session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta in December, 1917. Surendra Nath Banerjea who had become the leader of the Moderates after the death of Gokhale and Pherozshah Mehta in 1915, wanted the Raja of Mahmudabad to be the President. But in the end, Surendra Nath Banerjea had to give way. At the Calcutta Session, Surendra Nath Banerjea made a most flamboyant speech in praise of Mrs. Besant and her great work.

But before the Congress Session was held, Montague, Secretary of State for India, arrived in Bombay on November 10th. The Bombay Home Rule League, at Gandhiji's suggestion, collected over 50,000 signatures from the citizens of Bombay for the support of the Congress-League Scheme, to send it on to Montague as a petition from the people of India. Mrs. Besant referred to this petition in her Presidential Address at the Calcutta Congress:

"Mr. Gandhi's capital idea of a monster petition for the Congress-League Scheme for which signatures were only to be taken after careful explanation of its scope and meaning, has proved to be an admirable method of political propaganda. The soil in the Madras Presidency had been well prepared by a wide distribution of popular literature, and the Propaganda Committee had scattered over the land in the vernaculars a simple explanation of Home Rule. The result of active work in the villages during the last year showed itself in the gathering in less than a month of nearly a million signatures. They have been taken in duplicate, so that we have a record of a huge number of people, interested in Home Rule, and the hosts will increase in ever-widening circles, preparing for the coming Freedom."

This monster petition was presented to Montague by Mrs. Besant, Tilak and Jinnah when the joint deputation of the two Home Rule Leagues met Montague on November 26 in Delhi. Montague says in his Diary:

".....and then Mrs. Besant and the great Tilak came with their Home Rule League, and read us a more extreme and bitter address, but one which was undoubtedly interesting and good. Of course, the Home Rule League's de-

mands are the same as the Congress's, the Home Rule League really having been started to do the propaganda for the rather old-fashioned Congress. Mrs. Besant told me that she found that Congress held its meetings nearby Christmas each year, and between whiles went to sleep. It is her activity and her League which has really stirred the country up into a condition in which it is not true to say that political interest is confined to the educated classes. They are all seething with a desire for some change. Mrs. Besant, in her white and gold embroidered Indian clothes, with her short, white hair, and the most beautiful voice I have ever heard, was very impressive, and read magnificently. Again a casket was presented, this time quite an attractive object, an elephant tusk."

Mrs. Besant had an unscheduled private meeting with Montague, in spite of the fact that Lord Chelmsford had insisted that Montague should not see the Indian leaders separately all by himself and that Chelmsford and Montague both together should meet them.

But Montague found a way out of this difficulty. Charles Roberts, M.P., had come along with Montague to help him. Charles Roberts asked Mrs. Besant to meet him (Roberts). Hardly had Mrs. Besant shaken hands with Roberts and sat down when Montague dropped in as if by accident. Roberts walked out of the room and Montague had over an hour's talk with Mrs. Besant. This Mrs. Besant told me herself on December 22, at Kharagpur station when she and I were on our way to Calcutta, she from Madras and I from Bombay.

She further told me that her talks with Montague were satisfactory and she was confident that Montague's proposals would lead India to the cherished goal of responsible self-government within the British Commonwealth.

Mrs. Besant had more meetings with Montague in Madras. Mrs. Besant wrote to Montague that she did not attend Pentland's Garden Party at Government House in honour of Montague because she was not invited; that she had called at Government House when she was released from internment in order to let bygones be bygones, but that the officials were petty-minded. Montague writes in his 'Diary': "If I had been Pentland, I think I should have asked her to the Garden Party and sat her at tea

between the Viceroy and myself: it would have been a pretty revenge!" Montague asked Chelmsford to check up with Pentland Mrs. Besant's complaint. Pentland's reply was that if he had invited Mrs. Besant to the party, the whole European Community, Englishmen and English women present at the party, would have left the party in protest. The British non-official community were as stupid and idiotic as the British officials and their wives. The Aga Khan in his autobiography, has rightly criticised the British women in India for their racial snobbishness and their unjustified superior poses towards the Indians. The Aga Khan blames the British women in India for creating more bitterness in India against the then ruling classes.

Mrs. Besant asked Montague that if she went to England in her capacity as the President of the Theosophical Society, would the Government of India let her come back to India. Also the British Labour Party had invited her to help the Party in its fight for India. Montague could not give this assurance and Lord Chelmsford definitely hinted that she would not be allowed to come back.

At the Calcutta Session of the Congress, the proceedings commenced with the singing of 'Vande Mataram' by C. R. Das's sister. Then came the Presidential Address, which I heard with rapt attention sitting less than ten yards in front of her.

She began:

"Fellow-Delegates and Friends,

"Every one who has preceded me in this chair has rendered his thanks in fitting terms for the gift which is truly to be said to be the highest that India has it in her power to bestow. It is the sign of her fullest love, trust and approval, and the one whom she seats in that chair is, for his year of service, her chosen leader. But if my predecessors found fitting words for their gratitude, in what words can I voice mine, whose debt to you is so overwhelmingly greater than theirs? For the first time in Congress history, you have chosen as your President one who, when your choice was made, was under the heavy ban of Government displeasure, and who lay interned as a person dangerous to public safety. While I was humiliated, you crowned me with honour, while I was slandered, you believed in my integrity and good faith, while I was crushed under the heel

of bureaucratic power you acclaimed me as your leader, while I was silenced and unable to defend myself you defended me and won for me release. I was proud to serve in lowliest fashion, but you lifted me up and placed me before the world as your chosen representative. I have no words with which to thank you, no eloquence with which to repay my debt. My deeds must speak for me, for words are too poor. I turn your gift into service to the Motherland; I consecrate my life anew to her in worship by action. All that I have and am, I lay on the Altar of the Mother, and together we shall cry, more by service than by words: Vande Mataram!"

She concluded her Presidential address with a forceful and inspiring peroration:

"Fellow-Delegates, pardon me that I have kept you so long. Only once in my life can I take this Congress Chair, and speak my heart out to you on this country that we love so well. Who can tell, in the present keen strife, if I shall be left free to speak to you again, to work with you as your leader, during this coming year of office? If I am allowed to carry on my work, then I crave your help during the coming year. You have trusted me enough to elect me as your President, trust me enough to work with me as your President, until I prove false to your trust. You cannot always agree with me, and I do not shrink from your criticism. I only ask you not to take for granted the truth of everything said against me by my enemies, for I cannot spare time to answer them. I cannot promise to please you always, but I can promise to strive my best to serve the Nation, as I judge of service. I cannot promise to agree with and to follow you always; the duty of a leader is to lead while he should always consult his colleagues and listen to their advice, the final responsibility before the public must be his, and his, therefore, the final decision. A general should see further than his officers and his army, and cannot explain, while battles are going on, every move in a campaign; he is to be justified or condemned by his results. Up till now, knowing me to be of this Nation only by love and service, not by birth, I have claimed no authority of leadership, but have only fought in the front of the

battles and served as best as I might. Now, by your election, I take the place which you have given, and fill it worthily. Enough of myself. Let us think of the Mother.

"To see India free, to see her hold up her head among the Nations, to see her sons and daughters respected everywhere, to see her worthy of her mighty past, engaged in building a yet mightier future—is not this worth working for, worth suffering for, worth living and worth dying for? Is there any other land which evokes such love for her spirituality, such admiration for her literature, such homage for the valour, as this glorious Mother of Nations, from whose womb went forth the races that now, in Europe and America, are leading the world? And has any land suffered as our India has suffered, since her sword was broken on Kurukshetra, and the peoples of Europe and of Asia swept across her borders, laid waste her cities, and discrowned her Kings? They came to conquer but they remained to be absorbed. At last, out of those mingled peoples, the Divine Artificer has welded a Nation, compact not only of her own virtues, but also of those her foes had brought to her, and gradually eliminating the vices which they had also brought.

"After a history of millennia, stretching far back out of the ken of mortal eyes; having lived with but not died with, the mighty civilizations of the Past; having seen them rise and flourish and decay, until only their sculptures remained, deep buried in earth's crust; having wrought and triumphed and suffered, and having survived all changes unbroken, India, who has been verily the crucified among Nations, now stands on this her Resurrection moving, the Immortal, the Glorious, the Ever-Young, and India shall soon be seen, proud and self-reliant, strong and free, the radiant splendour of Asia, the Light and the Blessing of the World."

"Mrs. Besant refers to the possibility of her not being free in the coming year (1918) because she knew that the Government of India were seriously considering putting her back in jail. Madness and stupidity could not have gone further."

**Mrs. Besant's address had been not only a cold survey but**

a hot demand on the Bureaucracy for a long step towards the freedom of the country. She made it known that her year of office would be one of work. They had put her in the office of leadership and she intended to lead until the next President was elected. And to assist in her work, she selected the young C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar as the Secretary of the Congress.

In Calcutta, Mrs. Besant saw, at a secret meeting, the leader of the Bengal anarchist group at the latter's request. The Bengal anarchists at that time, as a result of bitterness and despair, had taken to manufacturing and throwing bombs and planning murders of individual Britishers. Mrs. Besant told them that this violence would not help India to attain Swaraj; it would only create more bitterness and more enmity. The leader accepted Mrs. Besant's point of view and agreed to give her a chance in her work to attain Home Rule for India and to withhold all violent activities. Mrs. Besant did not keep any written record of this talk.

After the Calcutta Congress, I went with my mother and wife to Jagannath Puri and my wife and I returned to Bombay on January 10, 1918. I met Lokmanya Tilak at the Kalyan station as he was walking on the platform waiting for a train to take him to Poona. He asked me to have tea with him in the Refreshment Room and we were together for over twenty minutes. This was a red letter day for me. In 1897, I was five years old then—when Tilak was first arrested, my father bailed him out on a personal security of Rs. 1,25,000/-. Tilak was always grateful to my father for this and Tilak was, therefore, always particularly kind to me.

Tilak was not orthodox. He broke caste and caste restrictions, though he did not take active part in the work of social reforms, because he thought that the first priority should be given to the problem of Indian political freedom and the other problems could wait till after the attainment of Swaraj. He was, therefore, wrongly understood as being opposed to Social Reforms. "Swaraj is my Birth-right and I shall take it. So long as it is awake within me, I am not old, no weapon can cut this spirit, no fire can burn it, no water can wet it, no wind can dry it. I am young in spirit though old in body. I do not wish to lose this privilege of youth". These words of Lokmanya Tilak spoken on the Home Rule Resolution at the Nasik Conference

in 1917 explain his philosophy and determination as a Karma Yogi. It was thrilling to hear these words from Lokmanya—"Swaraj is my Birthright". They awakened the people of India to their sense of responsibility and to their duty to the Motherland and became the "Mantra" which India took up in right earnest.

I have the happiest recollections of my contacts with Lokmanya Tilak for four years—1916 to 1920. Knowing him so intimately, I had great respect and affection for him and I have always felt grateful to him for his kindness to me.

For delivering two oral speeches in Marathi on "Swaraj" and "Home Rule for India" in Belgaum and Ahmednagar in May, 1916, he was bound over. Tilak appealed and Jinnah appeared for him and the Bombay High Court quashed the order of the Lower Court. This was a great landmark in the fight for Swaraj and was duly celebrated in Bombay.

The two great political centres in Bombay at that time were Sardar Griha, where Lokmanya Tilak lived and Jinnah's Chamber in the High Court. All political roads led to those two places for organisation, consultation and decision.

Tilak and Mrs. Besant agreed to work together. It was decided that they should work jointly with two separate Home Rule Leagues. Mrs. Besant told me that Tilak assured her that, whilst they were working together, he would abjure all thoughts of violence, direct or indirect, for the attainment of Swaraj.

Tilak offered active support to the war effort of the United Kingdom and promised to recruit 100,000 men to participate in the war if England would agree to grant freedom to India. Mrs. Besant also offered full co-operation to the war effort but equally strongly demanded freedom for India. "The price of India's loyalty is India's Freedom" she pleaded. It was nothing but blind folly on the part of the British Government that they did not take advantage of these offers.



## CHAPTER VII

### I MEET JINNAH

I remember having first met Jinnah in June, 1916, two months after I took my M.A. at a meeting of the Bombay Presidency Association. The meeting had an informal atmosphere. The Bombay Presidency Association was started in 1885 by the sponsors of the first session of the Indian National Congress which was held in Bombay in December, 1885, and during the late nineties, Justice K. T. Telang and Justice (afterwards Sir) Narayan Chandavarkar were its Secretaries. During the middle twenties, I was its Honorary Secretary along with K. Natarajan and Faiz Tyabji, with the amiable Sir Dinshaw Petit, Mrs. Ruttie Jinnah's father, as its Chairman. It was always an all-party political organization and did useful work for several years. By the end of 1928 it was defunct. At this meeting, in June, 1916, there were about 25 people present. After two or three speeches, I saw somebody in check trousers, black coat, hair parted on the side and moustache, addressing the meeting and everybody listening with rapt attention. The speaker looked cheerful was in high spirits and spoke with great confidence. He was summing up, trying to reconcile the different opinions expressed. I asked the late P. K. Telang who the speaker was. Telang retorted: "You don't know Jinnah?" Of course, I knew of Jinnah, but had never seen him before. He, then 42, had already made his mark as the leader of the Bombay Bar—well-known for cross-examinations and powers of arguing—and also in the Indian Legislative Council, the Central Legislature as it was then called. He was known as the Muslim Gokhale, emblem of Hindu-Muslim unity as Sarojini Naidu called him. Phirozshah Mehta had taken Jinnah under his wings and young Jinnah was a leader of no small repute and importance even as far back as the pre-Gandhi period of 1916.

After the meeting, Telang introduced me to Jinnah as a young Theosophist working under Mrs. Annie Besant. Jinnah

bowed gracefully, showed friendliness and asked me to take to politics seriously and to work hard. This was the beginning of a friendship-I was only 24 then-which lasted unbroken right till his death in September, 1948.

The reasons for Jinnah's cheerfulness at the Association's meeting-I discovered later. He had spent the two months of summer vacation in Darjeeling with Sir Dinshaw and Lady Dinbai Petit and there he fell in love with their 16 year old beautiful daughter, Ruttie. When they returned to Bombay in early June, all Bombay heard of their impending marriage but the parents did not like the idea of their daughter marrying a Mohammedan. Ruttie was a minor but she was determined to marry Jinnah. The parents, as guardians of the minor girl, took a High Court injunction against Jinnah marrying or having any contacts with the minor. So, Jinnah and Ruttie had to wait. But time and separation did not make her forget Jinnah. As she reached 18, she, the brave girl, walked out of the parental house and the marriage was performed under Muslim rites, Ruttie being converted to Islam. This had to be done because the Civil Marriage Act at that time was rigid and stipulated that those marrying under the Civil Marriage Act had to affirm solemnly that they belonged to no religion. This would have made it impossible for Jinnah to remain a member of the Central Legislative Assembly representing a Muslim Constituency.

Jinnah's early life can be briefly traced. Born to poor parents in Karachi on 25th December, 1876, he had nothing particularly remarkable in his early childhood, except that at the age of fifteen, he was married to a child-wife. Immediately afterwards he went to England in 1892. Soon after he went there, his wife died. Apart from studying for his Barrister's Examination, he attended in London House of Commons meetings. Jinnah took an active part in the election campaign of Dadabhai Navroji. He returned to Karachi as a Barrister in 1896 at the age of twenty and soon migrated to Bombay. For more than three years, he hardly received any briefs. In 1900, he became a temporary Presidency Magistrate. He asked his younger sister, Fatima, to come to Bombay and put her in a Roman Catholic Convent at Bandra, seven miles away from Bombay, in spite of the opposition of the orthodox Mohammedan community. Jinnah visited Fatima every Sunday in her Convent, going there

on horse-back. When he was offered a permanent Presidency Magistrate's job, he refused it as he did not want to be tied down for all time to come in the blind alley of Government service. He had confidence in himself that he would make good in the legal profession. He was known to be scrupulously honest and this reputation he rightly maintained till the end of his life. He was appointed Legal Adviser to the Bombay Municipal Corporation on Rs. 1,000/- p.m. He was gifted with the sixth sense and this stood him well not only in his legal career but also later all throughout his political life.

He was a clear thinker and had a keen sense of justice which he used to good advantage in dealing with his political opponents and he always proved himself in later years a superior tactician against Gandhiji's continuously changing moods and policies and Jawaharlal Nehru's impetuosity and impulsiveness.

In 1904, the Congress had passed a resolution for sending delegates to England to rouse public opinion in view of the forthcoming British elections. Sir William Wedderburn, who had come out to attend the Congress, was anxious that the deputation should make a success and that Pherozshah should take the lead in the matter. But Pherozshah could not go. It was decided that Gokhale and Jinnah should go as the representatives of Bombay on the Indian deputation. Pherozshah was a great believer in making the Indian case known in England and he had great confidence in the British Liberal Party.

Jinnah shot into legal and political limelight when Pherozshah Mehta, himself a great lawyer, briefed him in what then came to be known as "The Caucus Case". Jinnah was only 31 then. Jinnah had started working in Sir Pherozshah's Chambers.

Jinnah was sometimes considered to be temperamentally rude but this apparent rudeness was the result of his deep honesty.

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad in his "Recollections and Reflections" writes :

"Jinnah came to the Bar in 1895 when I was still on the Appellate side. After I came over to be Original side, I came in contact with him and we used to appear together as well as against each other in various cases. Jinnah had always, even in his junior days, shown considerable inde-

pendence and courage. He never allowed himself to be overborne either by the judge or the opposing Counsel. Once Strangman and Jinnah were briefed together in a case and Jinnah attended a consultation in Strangman's Chamber. It was said that during the consultation, Strangman spoke to Jinnah in a manner which the latter regarded as insulting. Ever since, Jinnah always refused to go into Strangman's room for consultation and they never talked to each other. I remember an episode in the Court of the late Justice Mirza. Jinnah and myself were appearing on opposite sides and there were other Counsel appearing for some of the various parties in the suit. During the course of argument, Jinnah addressed the judge in a manner which the judge resented. Justice Mirza told Jinnah that he was committing contempt of Court. Strangely enough, the judge turned to me and said: "Don't you think Mr. Jinnah is guilty of contempt of court?" It was indeed stupid of the judge to have put such a question to me. I answered 'It is not for me to give an opinion whether Mr. Jinnah had committed contempt or not. It is your privilege to determine that but I can say that knowing Mr. Jinnah as I do, he could never have intended to insult the Court'. Jinnah, thereafter, ceased to appear before this judge for some time.

"I came in close contact with Jinnah in public life. We were together in the Congress for many years. We led the agitation against the Simon Commission in Bombay. We were together in the old Imperial Legislative Council and the Indian Legislative Assembly and also at the Round Table Conference. Our personal relations have always been cordial."

During these years of Jinnah's early success as a lawyer, he met Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. She wrote of him:

"Never was there a nature whose outer qualities provided so complete an antithesis of its inner work. Tall and stately, but thin to the point of emaciation, languid and luxurious of habit, Mohamed Ali Jinnah's attenuated form is the deceptive sheath of a spirit of exceptional vitality and endurance. Somewhat formal and fastidious, and a little aloof and imperious of manner, the calm hauteur of his

accustomed reserve but marks—for those who know him—a native and eager humanity, an intuition quick and tender as a woman's, a humour gay and winning as a child's. Pre-eminently rational and practical, discreet and dispassionate in his estimate and acceptance of life, the obvious sanity and serenity of his worldly wisdom effectually disguise a shy and splendid idealism which is the very essence of the man."

In December, 1906, he attended the Congress for the first time at Calcutta. He was Private Secretary to Dadabhoi Navroji, the President of the Congress. Jinnah learned much from reading Dadabhoi's speeches and he absorbed some ideas from the Grand Old Man as Dadabhoi came to be known.

Jinnah must have been thrilled by Dadabhoi's clarion call for *Swaraj*. He listened to Dadabhoi declaring:

"All our sufferings of the past centuries demand before God and men reparation..... The British people would not allow themselves to be subjected for a single day to such an unnatural system of Government as the one which has been imposed upon India for nearly a century and a half..... We do not ask for favours. We only want justice. Instead of going into any further divisions or details of our right as British Citizens, the whole matter can be comprised in one word—'Self-Government', or '*Swaraj*'.

In 1906, when he was 32, he made a suggestion in the Suggestion Book of the Orient Club that with regard to the rule that a member who loses playing billiards against another member a game of 100 points paying twelve annas, when the member plays with the Club Marker, he should be charged only six annas. Ruttie and I teased Jinnah about it twenty years later round about 1927 and he replied that six annas was very much six annas and in those days when his legal practice was not bringing a good income, he could not afford to pay twelve annas a game. Not having a lucrative practice at the Bar, he used to go to the Club early in the afternoon at about 5 and not finding any members there, perforce he had to play billiards with the Club Marker. His other favourite game was Chess which he played well. His knowledge of the complicated game of Chess stood him in good stead in his political life and he used it to

good purpose by his shrewd calculations to checkmate his political opponents. He never took kindly to cards.

The Muslim League Session was held in Bombay in December, 1915. Lord Willingdon did not like the idea of the Muslim League and the Congress getting together as friends. The League Session was opposed by Muslims loyal to the British Raj headed by the nonagenarian, Suleman Cassum Mitha. There were disturbances at the open session by hooligans and it was suggested that the Police Commissioner, S. M. Edwards, had a hand in creating these disturbances. The session was held behind the Parsi Gymkhana and access to it was over the Marine Line overbridge. Edwards saw Mrs. Besant who was invited to attend the Session proceeding towards the Pandal, advised her not to proceed as there were disturbances. Mrs. Besant curtly replied: "I know who has caused the disturbances" and ignoring Edwards' advice proceeded to the Pandal. The Raja of Mahmudabad, a genuine Nationalist Muslim, who was President of the Session, and Jinnah convened a convention of the Muslim League at the Taj Mahal Hotel. I met the Raja of Mahmudabad at a reception given in his honour by Jinnah at his residence, "South Court", and again at his suite of rooms at The Taj.

After the Lucknow Congress, things were fairly quiet in Bombay till the internment of Mrs. Besant on 16th June, 1917. Jinnah joined the Home Rule League and with him he brought into it the whole legal profession. Branches of the Home Rule League were started in different parts of the City and all over the Bombay Presidency, particularly in Gujarat. Thousands of leaflets and pamphlets were published week after week. After-dinner meetings were held in Bombay at Kalbadevi and Mandvi and every fortnight big public meetings were held at Shantaram's Chawl, Girgaum, addressed by, among others, Jinnah, Tilak, Kharde, Khadilkar, N. C. Kelkar and Horniman.

For those open air meetings at the Shantaram's Chawl, we had to get special permits from the Police Commissioner (Griffiths) and as the organiser of these meetings, this duty fell on me. When I called at the Police Commissioner's Office by previous appointment for this purpose, I found that there were no chairs near his table for visitors to be seated though there were quite a few near the walls in the big room. I did not like

the idea of standing in front of him as a petitioner; so I removed my sandals and sat on his table cross-legged. He immediately rang the bell and asked the peon to bring me a chair. Later, when he and I met in the Bombay Legislative Council in 1921, by this time he was Inspector General of Police, he made friends with me and invited me for tea at his house in Yeravda. He confessed that he had put his C.I.D. men to spy on me for my labour and political activities and had found nothing objectionable in my work except that I always indulged in extremist politics. With regard to some of my friends in the Home Rule League, he had discovered that their personal life was far from clean and he had given full details of their irregular life to Gandhiji, with particular reference to Gandhiji's insistence among his followers on clean, pure and truthful lives. Griffiths was an excellent mimic; he spoke Marathi fluently and correctly.

The Shantaram Chawl meetings were a bug-bear to Lord Willingdon. For the first time in the history of political agitation, the masses were approached and were made politically conscious. The same holds good for important towns in Gujarat like Surat, Nadiad, Anand, Ahmedabad and Godhra and the surrounding rural districts. Home Rule League branches were started, literature distributed and local leaders came forward to help and continue the work started by the leaders from the Bombay Home Rule League. The first three years of the Home Rule League set the tone for the mass political agitation by Gandhiji.

Umar Sobani, Shankerlal Banker and I met Jinnah almost daily in his Chambers to arrange our day-to-day programme of political propaganda.

In July, 1917, the Gujarat Sabha held at the Provincial Political Conference at Godhra. Gandhiji was the President and Vallabhbhai Patel the Secretary. Amongst the other top leaders present were Lokmanya Tilak, Jinnah, Khaparde, Vithalbhai Patel, Jehangir Petit and P. K. Telang. Vallabhbhai Patel was not a leader then. He was just entering politics. I met him first in Godhra where we happened to live in the same house. Tilak made a thrilling speech in Marathi lasting one hour, followed immediately by Khaparde who took one hour and a quarter to translate Tilak's speech in Gujarati. Gandhiji insisted on Jinnah also speaking in Gujarati. Jinnah agreed and he began:

"Gentlemen, I am speaking today in Gujarati as ordered by Gandhiji. Having now made this first part of my speech in Gujarati, Gentlemen, I shall complete my speech in English". This was followed by roars of laughter. And Jinnah spoke for over 40 minutes in English.

Jinnah attended the Monsoon Session of the Indian Legislative Assembly in Simla in September, 1917 and Tej Bahadur Sapru and he made strenuous successful efforts for the release of Mrs. Besant.

Soon after her marriage in 1918, Ruttie went to Simla where Jinnah had to attend the sessions of the Indian Legislative Assembly. She and Jinnah were guests at the dinner at the Viceregal Lodge and when she was introduced to Lord Chelmsford, she did not follow the British custom of courtesying to the Viceroy. Instead, she followed the Indian custom and folded her hands after shaking hands with the Viceroy. Immediately, after dinner the A.D.C. took Ruttie to talk to the Viceroy. Lord Chelmsford pompously told her: "Mrs. Jinnah, your husband has a great political future; you must not spoil it. In Rome you must do as the Romans do". Mrs. Jinnah retorted quickly: "That is exactly what I did to Your Excellency. In India I greeted you in the Indian way". That was the first and the last time she met Lord Chelmsford.

In 1921, she was sitting next to Lord Reading at Lunch in New Delhi. Lord Reading was moaning and groaning. He said to her: "Mrs. Jinnah, how I wish I could go to Germany. I very much want to go there. But I can't go." Mrs. Jinnah asked: "Your Excellency, why can't you go there?" Lord Reading replied: "The Germans do not like us, the British; so I can't go" Ruttie quietly asked: "How then did you come to India?" Reading immediately changed the subject.



## CHAPTER VIII

1917 — 18

MONTAGUE DECLARATION

MONTAGUE IN INDIA

MONTAGUE-CHELMSFORD REPORT

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONGRESS IN BOMBAY —

AUGUST, 1918

MY FIRST VISIT TO ADYAR

ADDRESS TO WILLINGDON

DELHI CONGRESS—CHRISTMAS 1918

WAR CONFERENCE

MAJOR DAVID GRAHAM POLE, Mrs. Besant's legal Adviser and friend toured India during the winter of 1916-17 and was present at the Lucknow Congress. He has said in his book "India In Transition": "I had an opportunity of realising how much unrest and dissatisfaction there was in India and how necessary it was for some declaration to be made by the British Government indicating a generous policy of self-determination for India. I tried to convey my impressions to those in authority on my return to this country. I had a long talk with the Prime Minister's Private Secretary, Mr. Phillip Kerr (later Lord Lothian), as a result of which I wrote him a letter on June 26th, 1917, which he undertook to put before the Prime Minister (Lloyd George) for his serious consideration". This was ten days after Mrs. Besant was interned. In view of the subsequent Declaration made two months later—20th August—by the Secretary of State for India—Montague—in the House of Commons, the terms of that letter are not without interest. In this letter, Graham Pole said: "I have had a good deal of correspondence with highly-placed Indian Officials and with many private friends in India (both Indians and Europeans), and I know that there is a tremendous feeling of unrest and distrust of the Government. At present we seem to be doing our best to sit on a safety valve, and one would think that we were simply using all our efforts to make an explosion take place. I know many of these Indians

myself, and I realize how easily they can be won at the present time if the right course is adopted. As you know, I was in India last Christmas, and attended the Indian National Congress at Lucknow. There were some good Indians present from all parts of India, but the heart-breaking thing was to see that scarcely one of the official class attended any of the Congress Meetings, because these Meetings happened to come during their Christmas holidays!

"I am absolutely convinced that unless some big wise and imaginative step is taken, or some statement made without delay outlining some big, generous policy and an indication of when it will come into operation, we are going to drive many of these splendid Indians into the position of Sinn Feinns, instead of giving them the opportunity of becoming really useful, free citizens....."

"I hope you will be able to get this matter before the Prime Minister and press its urgency. This is real War Work of first importance, and it would be a calamity if in India we have a repetition of our recent experiences in Ireland.

"I only wish that our Statesmen would realise the tremendous importance of this matter....."

It will not be denied that Montague's August 20 Declaration was hastened by Mrs. Besant's internment and the subsequent All-India agitation for her release as also President Wilson's letter to Lloyd George and the agitation in England where Mrs. Besant's name and her work were widely known.

Montague was in India from November, 1917 to April, 1918 touring all over the country to meet deputations of political and other organisations, heads of Indian States, Indian political leaders, Governors of Provinces and officials of the Government of India and Provincial Governments. Montague has left a full record of his Indian visit in his "Indian Diary". All his efforts were directed towards getting a unanimous report with Chelmsford so that it could have a proper reception from the British Government. Left to himself, the report could have been more progressive than the final report jointly submitted by him and the Viceroy.

Among the Governors whom he met were Willingdon (Bombay), Pentland (Madras), Benjamin Robertson (C.P.), Michael O'Dwyer (Punjab), James Meston (U.P.), Ronaldsney (Bengal),

Hailey (Chief Commissioner of Delhi). The important British officials whom he met were William Vincent (Home Member), William Meyer (Finance), Marris, Frank Sly, Row-Keppel, Thomas Holland, Du Boulay, Charles Barnes, Claude Hill, and Maffey, Private Secretary to Chelmsford (afterwards Governor of the N.W.F. Province). Lionel Curtis of the Round Table met Montague and sold him successfully the idea of Dyarchy. Everybody went on changing his mind. Montague gave way all along the line with a view to secure a unanimous report.

About Chelmsford, Montague later wrote: "He (Chelmsford) seems to me to be strongly prejudiced in his views, holding them very, very keenly, but I do not seem to see that any of them are his views. They always seem to me to be views collected from his surroundings".

The prominent Indian leaders who met Montague were Mrs. Besant, Tilak, Gandhi, C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Jinnah, Chimanlal Setalvad, Ibrahim Rahimtoola, C. Y. Chintamani, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Surendranath Banarjea, Bhupendranath Basu, Lord Sinha, Raja of Mahmudabad, Motilal Ghose, Dr. Subramani Aiyar, Stanley Reed, N. M. Samarth, Narayan Chandavarkar, R. P. Paranjpye, Sankaran Nair and Srinivas Sastri.

Tilak and Mrs. Besant were the two "extremists" according to Montague and the two leaders whose names occurred more frequently than the others were Mrs. Besant and C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar. About C. P. Montague writes "one of the cleverest men I have ever met in my life. He would do brilliantly at the English Bar. He was very extreme, but very, very, very able. He tied us completely into knots".

Montague reveals that he, as Secretary of State, did not gate-crash on Chelmsford in India because Chelmsford had already invited Austen Chamberlain, Montague's predecessor, to visit India. Austen Chamberlain had to resign as the Secretary of State because of the Mesopotamian muddle and his strongest critic in the Parliament was Montague himself.

In July, 1917, Montague speaking on the Mesopotamia debate in the House of Commons made a severe attack on the system of administration obtaining in India. He described the system as "too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too anti-diluvian, to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in mind", and

concluded by saying: "Unless you are prepared to remodel in the light of modern experience, this century-old administrative machine then I believe, I verily believe, that you will lose your right to control the destinies of the Indian Empire."

Gandhiji who met Montague is described by him (Montague) as a social reformer. Gandhiji had not plunged then in active politics.

It is not widely known that the break of the Moderates from the Congress was being thought about during Montague's visit and inspired by him, the suggestion being that non-official Britishers with their communal organisations should actively participate in Indian politics along with specially created Government of Indian machinery. These two should actively work with the Moderates to support Government and their proposals with a view to defeating the extremists. The Moderates were fighting shy of responsibility.

All through Chelmsford was afraid of Mrs. Besant and thought several times of interning her again. Montague's boast was that he achieved peace in India and freedom from any political agitation in the most critical six months of the First World War.

Montague was bewildered at the lack of foresight of the British official world.

Montague could not forget Mrs. Besant even when he visited the Elephanta Caves! He writes about this visit: "I particularly liked that Shiva who cut his wife into fifty-two pieces, only to discover that he had fifty-two wives! This is really what happens to the Government of India when it interns Mrs. Besant."

Montague narrates a story which he had heard but which he did not believe, about Lionel Curtis wanting to become a Hindu—Curtis had summoned some men from the Central Provinces who told him that: "No man not born a Hindu can become a Hindu". He said quite characteristically: "Oh, nonsense; any man can change his religion".

It is true that right till 1924, no one not born a Hindu could be converted into Hinduism. But the Hindu Maha Sabha, for political reasons, introduced the practice in 1924 of conversion into Hinduism; and now any one can become a Hindu just for the asking.

In February, 1918, Watson, Resident, Bharatpur, told Mon-

tague: "Alwar is under the impression that eventually a full Mrs. Besant programme will be accomplished in India in ten years."

It was impossible for Montague to close his eyes to the "seething, boiling, political flood raging across the country". But he found the urgency of the situation little understood in official quarters, either at Simla or in the Provinces. He noted in his Diary: "Our Viceroys approach their problem from the wrong side.....They do the work that they are called upon to do; they wade through files; they think of their regulations; and then as to the social side—precedence, precedence, precedence. Everything is divided into Government, and those who are not Government, officials and those who are not officials, or Government and the Opposition. Informal discussion, informal conversations, they do not know. Political instinct they have none. The wooing of constituents is beneath their idea. The coaxing of the Press is not their metier. Nothing is required of them but to get through their files and carry on their social work according to the rule. Everything is prescribed; everything is printed. Well, this may be all right for a Court, but it is all wrong when the Court is not royal, and is also the Prime Minister's place".

Montague continued: "I wish I could get the damned bureaucracy to realise this (that things were growing more serious every day) but we are literally sitting on an earthquake".

Montague was able to secure the agreement of the Viceroy and his Council to a scheme of reforms which would make a first step towards the goal of full responsible government envisaged in the August, 1917 Proclamation. The Montague-Chelmsford Report was published in July, 1918. The main terms of the Report, in brief, were Dyarchy in the Provinces with Reserved and Transferred subjects, non-official elected majority in the Indian Legislative Assembly but with no power and responsibility, and that too to be balanced by the creation of an Upper House, the Council of State, with a government majority, and members official and non-official to be nominated by the Government. The Indian element in the Viceroy's Executive Council was to be increased to three.

A Chamber of Princes to be presided over by the Viceroy, was also to be created, the function of the Chamber being purely advisory. The communal electorates were to be continued.

Following the publication of the Montague-Chelmsford

Report, two Committees, the Franchise and the Function Committees, presided over by Lord Southborough were appointed. The Franchise Committee did not favour the granting of the franchise to women!

The Mont-Ford Report was adversely criticised by all sections of political India except Gandhiji who said that the proposals gave India as much as she could chew! The Moderates found the proposals unsatisfactory but they would not call them disappointing. Mrs. Besant criticised them as "unworthy of England to offer and unworthy of India to accept". But she did not mean that she wanted to reject them outright. She had told Montague, he writes in his Diary "that so long as India was to get full responsible self-Government in a few years, she did not mind what India got immediately." Jinnah felt disappointed with the proposals but he thought they could be improved upon. He knew that Mrs. Besant was powerful and he wanted to canvas for her support. Mrs. Besant came down to Bombay at his request. She had a two-hour talk with Jinnah who did not want to criticise these proposals too drastically and wanted Mrs. Besant to tone down her criticism. As he came out of her room, looking terribly tired and half-dead, I asked him: "Well, Jinnah, how did it go?" And he answered, with his hand on his forehead: "My dear fellow, never argue with a woman!"

Mrs. Besant toured round the country looking for a suitable President for the Special Session of the Congress to consider the Montague proposals. Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his book "At the Feet of the Mahatma" says: "Mrs. Annie Besant came to Patna to talk over this matter. I had heard her speeches on previous occasions, but that was the first time I met her. She asked me whose election I would favour. I mentioned Gandhiji's name. She did not approve of my suggestion. It was, of course, a private talk, but she said: "He is very good for other kinds of work but he is not a politician". Perhaps, she had already made up her mind to have Shri Syed Hasan Imam elected to this office; for he had, before his appointment as Judge of the Calcutta High Court, attended Congress Sessions, taken interest in the activities of the Congress and contributed to its funds. He had made quite a name for himself as an independent Judge, particularly for his decisions in criminal cases. When the Patna High Court was constituted in 1916, he resigned his office and set himself

up in practice in Patna. He was thus a well-known person in the country. Mrs. Besant consulted many prominent people, and had him elected President.

Rajendra Prasad adds:

"I would mention here that when she told me that Gandhiji was not a politician, I put in a mild protest and referred her to the great work he had accomplished in Champaran. But it was of no avail. When she proposed the name of Shri Syed Hasan Imam, I had nothing to say against him. I think Mrs. Besant continued to entertain this opinion about Gandhiji, for, when the latter launched upon a country-wide movement of non-co-operation, she opposed him very vehemently, and condemned him as a representative of dark forces."

Syed Hasan Imam proved himself to be a successful President, tactful, pleasant, cheerful and always smiling. Rajendra Prasad attended the Congress but Gandhiji did not as he thoroughly disapproved of the criticism of the Montague proposals. He, on the other hand, very nearly joined the first Liberal Federation held by the Moderates who had seceded from the Congress and who wanted to accept whole-heartedly the Montague-Chelmsford proposals.

I was one of the General Secretaries of the Special Session held in Bombay in August and had the unique privilege and opportunity for the first time in this incarnation of coming close to Mrs. Besant and to be with her for over a fortnight from 7 in the morning till mid-night. This is how it happened. My brother who always used to be with her fell seriously ill and hence this opportunity came to me. During this fortnight, before and during the Sessions, she used to go and meet various Congress leaders. One morning at nine, she asked me to take her to Ridge Road where C. Vijaya Raghavachariar of Salem was staying as the guest of Manmohandas Ramji. Vijaya Raghavachariar saw Mrs. Besant descend from the car and shouted to her to go to the room where he was shaving with a long blade old-type razor. I waited outside for the whole hour that they were talking, and when we got into the car, she showed me twelve pages of notes she had made during her talks. These notes were headed "fundamental rights". She told me that she wanted 100 copies of these notes and asked me how soon I could get them for her. I asked: "Would it be all-right if I get them by 3 this afternoon?"

She thought I was crazy and said: "Did you understand what I told you?" I said: "Of course, I would get them printed and bring the copies to you by 3". In those days, printing in Bombay was not as quick as it has developed since; and she did not believe that I would fulfil the undertaking. Anyhow, she passed the papers on to me. I dropped her home and rushed to the Press in Girgaon and asked for the immediate printing of this pamphlet, adding that I would wait at the Press till those 100 copies were printed. The Press people said "impossible", as they had too much work on hand. I refused to accept this excuse for delay and I said I would remain at the Press and correct all the proofs—the first, second and the final proofs. At 2-45 the Press handed to me the 100 copies without a single printing mistake. I went straight to Mrs. Besant just a little before 3. Mrs. Besant was pleased and asked how I had managed to get the work done so quickly. I said that I stayed at the Press and corrected the proofs. She asked me: "Where did you lunch?" I said the Press people gave me a cup of tea. I knew Mrs. Besant liked quick, prompt, willing and efficient service.

Next afternoon, Mrs. Besant and I went to Sardar Griha, the home of Lokmanya Tilak whenever he was in Bombay. She had an hour's talk with him on the resolutions to be passed by the Special Session. As we got back into the car, she showed me her attachi-case and said it was snapped. She wanted a new one but had no time to get it as she had to return home to write an article for "New India" to be mailed early in the evening. I said I would get one for her. "But", she said "you don't know what I want and what I like." I replied "Leave it to me. I will get one which you like within an hour". She made no comment. I dropped her at Shanti Kunj, Pedder Road, the residence of Narottam Morarji, and went straight to Thackers. I got them to put, in my car eighteen attache-cases different sizes and quality and rushed back to Shanti Kunj. I brought all the eighteen attache-cases to Mrs. Besant's room. She was amused, picked up the one which she wanted and just said: "Thank you".

Some years later, she told me that whenever she gave me a job to do, she never worried about it any more for she was confident that I would see it through.

On another day at 8 in the morning, she and I went to the Taj Mahal Hotel. She had an appointment with C. P. Ramaswamy



Aiyar, the Congress Secretary. Just as she was about to enter his room, she told me: 'I have to see off Kasturi Ranga Aiyangar, Editor of "The Hindu", at the Alexandra Docks at 9. How long will it take to take us to the Alexandra Docks?' I said: "Two minutes from here to get to the car and four more minutes to get to the Alexandra Docks". She came out of C.P.'s room at seven minutes before 9. She appreciated my correct timing. The British Government had invited prominent Indian journalists to England, and Kasturi was one of them. She told me: "It is brave of Kasturi to venture upon this long voyage through hazardous seas. Besides, he is an old orthodox Hindu, unaccustomed to foreign ways of living and eating. I am, therefore, giving him some letters of introduction to our Theosophical friends who would help him to get proper vegetarian food." I must mention that Kasturi Ranga Aiyangar and his paper 'Hindu', because of their caste orthodoxy, were personally hostile to Mrs. Besant and her social and religious work. But Mrs. Besant had never any feeling of resentment and she did not hesitate to see Kasturi off and to make his visit to England successful. She introduced me to Kasturi. This was the only time that I met him.

The Special Session of the Congress at Bombay passed the following Resolution:

"The Congress appreciates attempts on the part of the Rt. Hon'ble the Secretary of State and His Excellency the Viceroy to inaugurate a system of responsible government in India and while it recognises that the proposals constitute an advance, it holds that the proposals as a whole are disappointing and unsatisfactory....."

This was a triumph for Mrs. Besant but the discussions in the Subjects Committee were prolonged. One day, the subjects Committee proceedings started at 7 in the morning and ended 16 hours later at 11 in the evening. All the delegates except two left the Subjects Committee Pandal for snacks and rest and these two were Mrs. Besant and Tilak. They never left their uncomfortable chairs. At four in the afternoon, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and myself were in the refreshment tent and she suggested that I should bring Mrs. Besant out. I said Mrs. Besant would not come out. Instead, I took refreshments to Mrs. Besant who had nothing to eat since morning. She was pleased with my devotion to her and my work and before leaving for Madras

after a fortnight's stay in Bombay, she invited me to go to Adyar as her guest. This Congress Session could be considered a great leap forward in my political and personal career not that I was doing all this work to make a big career for myself but I welcomed this as giving me more opportunities for service.

Bombay was soon seized with the disastrous Influenza epidemic and over 700 people died every day. After a fortnight, I went to Adyar and stayed there for a week as Mrs. Besant's guest. She put me in charge of Mr. and Mrs. Jinarajadas. She invited me to meet her at "New India" Office and later took me to the Y.M.I.A. I had several talks with her in her rooms at Adyar as also at the Y.M.I.A.

I asked her: "Would it not be wonderful if you and Gandhiji would work together and Swaraj would come much nearer?" She answered without the slightest hesitation: "My dear, Gandhi will never work with me. He does not believe in Swaraj; he does not want Swaraj. All that he wants is suffering; suffering for himself and suffering for the people."

I did not understand then the full significance of her meaning but made a mental note of what she said: This conversation took place more than 45 years ago. I now realise the full meaning of her words. It was true, Gandhiji did not want Swaraj.

One morning she said: "I must go and see Dr. Subramani Aiyar". She gave me her car and asked N. Sri Ram, now the President of the Theosophical Society, to take me to see Dr. Subramani Aiyar. Dr. Subramani spoke to me for about half an hour. I listened to him with all the respect that was due to him.

In 1918, was held the War conference in Delhi. To this Tilak was not invited. This was followed by a similar conference in Bombay to which some leaders of both the Home Rule Leagues were invited—Jinnah, Tilak, Kelkar, Horniman, etc. As Tilak rose to move a Resolution, Lord Willingdon ruled him out of order even before a single word was uttered by Tilak, insulted him and asked him to sit down. Thereupon, all the leaders of the two Home Rule Leagues left the Conference as a protest but Jinnah stayed on and made a most thunderous speech of his life smashing Lord Willingdon to pieces for his outrageous behaviour towards Tilak and having made his speech, he also walked out. The stupidity of the British could not go further. If the British had offered co-operation to the Indian leaders

during the First World War and given self-Government to India at the end of the war, England and India would have worked together politically, strengthening each other economically and militarily, would have by joint work, averted the danger of Colour and race war and the second World War would have been avoided. But false ideas of imperialism, racialism and snobbishness prevailed.

Within an hour of Tilak leaving the War Conference, I met him at the Sardar Griha. I had never before seen him so agitated and upset, he felt deeply hurt about Willingdon's insult in gagging him and ordering him to sit down. He was walking fast in the narrow verandah of the second floor of Sardar Griha, bare-backed, with his sacred thread showing across his body.

Early in November, some loyalist friends of Lord and Lady Willingdon mooted the idea of presenting an address to the departing Governor on behalf of the citizens of Bombay. Jinnah and we in the Home Rule League objected to the address being given in the name of the citizens of Bombay. We suggested instead that, if they so desired, the address may be given to Willingdon as from Lord Willingdon's friends. The organizers of the movement persisted in their efforts to make it a citizens' meeting. They requested the Sheriff to call a meeting of the citizens of Bombay. Protest meetings against this move were held every day in different parts of the City and the opposition to the move gained momentum. Gandhiji used to visit Bombay every week. We, Home Rulers, approached him to support us in our agitation against the Willingdon Address. Once again, as after Mrs. Besant's internment, he failed us. He refused to join and help us, raising a technical difficulty. He said that he was a citizen of Ahmedabad, not of Bombay and he would, therefore, have nothing to do with our agitation. We pointed out to him that this was not a question of being a citizen of Bombay but a question of principle. But he refused to help us.

On 10th December, 1918, the meeting convened by the Sheriff of Bombay, was to be held at the Town Hall, Bombay, to vote a citizens' address to Lord Willingdon, in their name. About 300 of us, Jinnah's followers, went to the Town Hall at 10 at night on the 9th December so that we could be the first to be admitted in the Town Hall when the gates opened the next morning. Eventually, we were able to rush in the Town

Hall at 8 a.m. and remained there until the police broke up the meeting in confusion at 6 p.m. and threw us out. Thousands of Bombay citizens had assembled on Town Hall steps and in the streets. Ruttie walked up the Town Hall steps at about 5 p.m. and stood bravely there inspite of police rowdyism. Jinnah won the day and the Address to Willingdon was not voted.

To celebrate the victory of Jinnah and the people of Bombay, a one rupee fund was started at the suggestion of Umar Sobani to build a Jinnah Memorial Hall. Within one month, 65,000 citizens of Bombay made a fund of Rs. 65,000/- and the Jinnah Memorial Hall was built in the Congress House compound. Mrs. Besant came down specially to Bombay to declare open the Jinnah Memorial Hall and she paid a handsome and glowing tribute to Jinnah for his services to the country.

It is not out of place to point out that as far back as 1895 at the time of retirement of Lord Harris, the then Governor of Bombay, some people got busy and planned to hold a public meeting of the citizens of Bombay to express commendation of his administration. There was considerable public opposition to this move. Dr. Deshmukh, Dr. K. N. Bahadurji and Sir Chimanlal Setalvad took an active part in this opposition. Ultimately, the promoters of the movement saw reason and the meeting that was called was confined to friends and admirers of Lord Harris.

The Delhi Congress met in December, 1918 under the Presidentship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. The Congress reaffirmed the Bombay Resolution relating to self-government and expressed the view that full responsible government should immediately be introduced in the Provinces of British India.

Mrs. Besant, Srinivas Sastri, and B. N. Sarma, (afterwards a member of Lord Chelmsford's Executive Council) moved certain amendments. Sastri argued that the words 'disappointing and unsatisfactory' be omitted from the text of the resolution. Mrs. Besant felt that the Bombay Special Session Resolution should be repeated. All the amendments were lost and the original resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority. Lokmanya Tilak was elected by the Congress to represent India before the Joint Parliamentary Committee in London.

After the Congress Session, Anusuyaben Sarabhai, P. K. Telang, Ruttonsi D. Morarji, Shankerlal Banker and myself went

to Simla for a week's holiday early in January, 1919. We returned to Bombay, and we found the first big general strike in the Cotton Mills had started. Shankerlal and I were plunged up to our necks in the workers' struggle for a better wage and a dearness allowance because of the higher cost of living.

## CHAPTER IX

### I MEET GANDHIJI

#### (1)

GANDHIJI RETURNED to India early in January, 1915. Before leaving South Africa, he confessed that India was a strange country to him. Between the year 1888, he was nineteen thne, when he first went to England for his legal studies, and 1914, when he finally left South Africa at forty-five he had spent less than four years in India. Gokhale was his political leader and Guru. Soon after his arrival in Bombay, he made another confession that he had felt, more at home among the indentured labourers of Natal than in the City of Bombay, much too 'westernised' to suit Gandhiji's taste.

Gandhiji returned from South Africa with a reputation already made as the leader of the Passive Resistance Movement and fighter against racial discrimination. Being a friend and colleague of Gokhale, he was considered a 'safe' politician, and his name appeared in the British Honours list in 1915 as a recipient of Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal. Lord Willingdon paid for the medal.

In 1912, Gokhale, during his tour of South Africa, tried to acquaint Gandhiji with the political situation in India, but found him hopelessly out of touch with the conditions. Gokhale became cautious and extracted a promise from Gandhiji that on his return to India he would not express himself upon public questions for a year, which was to be 'a year of probation'. It was taken for granted that Gandhiji would join the Servants of India Society which belonged to the moderate school of Indian politics. Before the year of probation was out, Gokhale died in February, 1915. Commenting on Gandhiji's application for admission to the Servants of India Society, Rt. Hon. Srinivas Sastri, wrote to his brother on 10th Jan. 1915: "if he (Gandhi) drops his anarchical views and takes ours, he joins the S.I.S. If not,

he eschews politics and becomes an exclusively social worker." When Gandhiji came to know that his application for this membership would be unanimously rejected,—this meant that the Servants of India Society felt that Gandhiji would not give up his anarchical views—Gandhiji thought it wise to withdraw his application. A few years later, when Sastri and I came to know each other intimately and had become great friends, he, who after Gokhale's death had become the President of the Servants of India Society, told me: "How wise we (the S. I. S.) were in rejecting unanimously Gandhiji's application for membership." Gandhiji bided his time and started feeling his way. How many people realised that Gandhiji was a philosophical anarchist as suggested by Sastri. He believed in no organised and constituted authority. But, he soon saw that he could not sell to India his anarchy in its naked form. I should mention that his anarchy was different from that of the anarchists and nihilists of Europe, who were trying to extend their ideas through violence, and one of their methods was to murder Heads of States and bring about chaos and disruption. Gandhiji's anarchy, philosophical in character, did not accept violence for its propagation and success. He thought he could do it through non-violence, non-cooperation and satyagraha because he was shrewd enough to see that the millions of India—illiterate and ignorant—could not take to organised mass violence and that any such attempt on the lines of 1857 struggle would be crushed by the British Government with force of arms.

To understand Gandhiji's philosophy and his work in India for thirty years right till his assassination in January, 1948, it is pertinent to refer to an episode in Benares in 1916 in which Gandhiji clashed with Mrs. Besant. This episode, Nethercot points out, was to condition her relations with the man who was to play perhaps the greatest role in her political future, Mohandas Gandhi. The occasion was the laying of the foundation stone of the Hindu University in February, 1916 by the retiring Viceroy, Lord Hardinge. The ceremony was to last four days. The assembly consisted *inter alia* of Maharajas, Rajas, and prominent citizens of India taken to Benares in thirty special trains. The Maharaja of Darbhanga, as President of the University Committee, was to read the opening address. Speeches upon speeches were scheduled, the culminating one of which, on "The Univer-

sity as a Builder of Character" was to be delivered by Annie Besant as founder of the original Central Hindu College. Gandhiji whose influence on Indian students was growing every day, was to precede her: Nethercot says: "Everything went according to plan until the last night. Whether the fact that troops and C.I.D. men had been stationed everywhere, in the buildings and gardens, along the roads and even the railway line, to protect Hardinge and his officials from possible violence, was responsible for the good order and good manners of the crowd is problematical. At any rate, this sort of interference was resented as an insult by many Indians and regarded as a downright provocation by Annie Besant".

Gandhiji arrived late at the meeting. He launched, more or less extemporaneously into his speech.

The first suggestion in New India that anything was gone wrong was a tense paragraph at the end of a long account of the events of the whole evening, perhaps by Mrs. Besant herself. According to the report, Gandhiji's speech, giving advice to young students preparing to enter the University, had seemed to lend support to the "anarchist" movement.

Gandhiji began his speech provocatively by expressing his feeling of humiliation in having to address his audience in English rather than some vernacular, since the teaching of English in the Indian schools for the last fifty years had further kept the country from its objective of self-government. Drawing a contrast between the conditions of the poor in the filthy lanes around the temple and the gorgeous scene on the dais behind him, he turned to the massed princes and insulted them by impudently (he himself later said "humourously") calling attention to the jewels they were wearing as being "necessary for them to hold those treasures in trust for the nation before we could raise our ideals". Disregarding the stir caused by these remarks, he went on to comment ironically on the police precautions taken for the Viceregal visit, and from there moved to the subject of anarchism and assassination which had long plagued the province and especially the students of Bengal.

Mrs. Besant listened with horror as she thought her ears told her how he was speaking of "bombs bringing about the annulment of the partition of Bengal, with praise for the heroism of those who threw them." When he declared flatly, "I am an



anarchist", without explaining that he meant a "philosophical anarchist", she feared that a riot might be incited in that part of the "gunpowdery" audience which did not know his true beliefs.

Mrs. Besant rose to a point of order and requested Darbhanga to stop what had become a purely political speech from Gandhiji. Darbhanga asked Gandhiji to finish his speech in five minutes. By this time, the sensitive Princes were thoroughly roused and led by the Maharaja of Alwar, many princes left. The meeting broke up prematurely in utter confusion. The controversy on this incident raged for days together, with explanations from Gandhiji. It ended with a signed article by Mrs. Besant in "New India" entitled "In Defence of M. K. Gandhi" in which she said that all who had read Gandhi's defence would realize his innocence of any wrong intention. It was "gunpowdery" audience as he did not realise, and she feared that many, particularly students, might not know his position as a "philosophical anarchist". She concluded: "Gandhi's words were unwise under the circumstances, but we still honour him 'for his life and lofty ideals'. This editorial, rightly says Nethercot, was a first-rate specimen of her favourite elevated line of Theosophical tolerance and forgiveness".

Writing almost fifty years after the event, I think that Mrs. Besant was right and Gandhiji was wrong. Gandhiji did not realise that his saying "I am an anarchist" would imply support of and encouragement to the 'bomb cult'. The atmosphere in Bengal, due to the activities of the bomb-makers and bomb-throwers was inflammable and the Bengal anarchists would understand Gandhiji's words as asking them to go ahead with their violent activities. Gandhiji of course, never meant to support or encourage the bomb-throwing anarchists. Similarly, in 1919, when he launched the movement of Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act, he wrote in his Gujarati weekly "Navjivan": "I have taken to dacoity against Government, I am a dacoit". Within 48 hours, he received a letter by post from a notorious dacoit in Gujrat which Gandhiji published in the next issue of his weekly. The dacoit wrote to Gandhiji that he was a dacoit, was functioning in Gujrat and that he was happy to note that he had a brother dacoit working in the same area. He added he had forty men in his gang and enquired how many Gandhiji

had ! He suggested that he and Gandhiji should join together with their respective gangs of dacoits and they would be able to achieve much better results, working together. He asked Gandhiji to send his representative to the secret place mentioned by him to come to terms about the partnership. At the same time, he advised Gandhiji not to speak so openly about his profession of a dacoit as that might lead him (Gandhiji) into trouble with Government !

At Gokhale's suggestion, Gandhiji toured all over India during 1915-1916 to get to know the political and social problems of India.

During Gandhiji's visit to Bombay, Sastri wrote to his brother : "he (Gandhi) refused the invitation of Mrs. Maneckbai Bahdurji to stay with her and her husband (D. N. Bahadurji) because his (Gandhi's) caste people did not like his being a Parsi's guest." Mrs. Bahadurji was a Hindu, daughter of the well-known Dr. Atmaram Turkhud.

Sastri continues: "The odd thing about Gandhi is that he was dressed quite like a Bania : no one could mark the slightest difference. He had a big sandal mark on the forehead and a kumkum dot besides. (caste marks of a 'high caste' Hindu)".

When in Ahmedabad, which he made his home, he stayed with the multi-millionaire Ambalal Sarabhai in his palatial house. He did not feel too comfortable there. My impression is that it is then that he thought in terms of establishing an Ashram. He had not enough funds to do so and he wrote, among others, to Shankerlal Banker to find him money. Shankerlal was his first capture in Bombay. He succumbed to Gandhiji's charm and persuasion. By 1919, Shankerlal gave up permanently his residence in Bombay and migrated to Ahmedabad to work in the closest co-operation with Ben Anusuyaben Sarabhai for the foundation and development of the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association. After graduating, Shankerlal went to England to study tanning. His studies were interrupted as a result of the outbreak of the First World War and returned to India by the autumn of 1914. He immediately set up a laboratory in his house to continue his research work in tanning. Sir George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, complained to me in June, 1922, that I was always found in company of Shankerlal and that Shankerlal had set up a laboratory for the purpose of making

bombs! I told him that it was true that I was always with Shankerlal for the simple reason that not only was I his tenant on the ground floor of his bungalow at Chowpatty from 1914 onwards, but we were great friends in spite of political differences. It was absurd to suggest that Shankerlal was making bombs. From being a first class Westerner in his dress, manners, thinking and methods of work, he became a perfect Gandhite. In his political manoeuvrings, Shankerlal was rather inclined to be intolerant. Before he became closely associated with Gandhiji, he seriously considered the possibility of creating a Sinn Fein Movement in India on the lines of the Irish Sinn Fein violence movement. Shankerlal gave Umar and me about twenty books on Irish Sinn Fein Movement and methods. I disapproved of the principle and practice of the Sinn Fein movement; so did Umar. The idea was soon forgotten and automatically dropped as the Home Rule Movement under Mrs. Besant gained impetus and took up all our time and energy. During these formative years, Shankerlal and I read Bernard Shaw, Zangwill, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Hauptmann, the theosophical writings of Mrs. Besant, C. W. Leadbeater and A. P. Sinnett and Vivekanand and Tagore. P. K. Telang was our friend, philosopher and guide and Telang, Bhulabhai Desai, Shankerlal, Indulal Yagnik and I were generally together for discussions.

Jawaharlal Nehru says this in his Autobiography of his first meeting with Gandhiji: "My first meeting with Gandhiji was about the time of the Lucknow Congress during Christmas, 1916. All of us admired him for his heroic fight in South Africa, but he seemed very distant and different and unpolitical to many of us young men. He refused to take part in Congress or national politics then and confined himself to the South African Indian question. Soon afterwards his adventures and victory in Champaran, on behalf of the tenants of the planters, filled us with enthusiasm. We saw that he was prepared to apply his methods in India also, and they promised success."

At the time of the Lucknow Congress, Gandhiji heard for the first time of the grievances of the Champaran plantation workers; and after attending the meeting of the A.I.C.C. at Calcutta in April, 1917, he went to Champaran to make investigations into the grievances of the ryots. The Government officials in Muzaffarpur brought pressure on Gandhiji not to proceed to

Champanan but Gandhiji persisted. An Order under Sec. 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code was, therefore, served on him by the District Magistrate to leave the district. Gandhiji refused to obey the order. He wrote to Lord Chelmsford, recalling his own long-standing association with the Government and his record of public service, for which a Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal had been conferred on him and said that while he considered that as a great honour, he felt that since Government did not trust him enough to let him do public service in Champanan, it would not be proper for him to keep that medal and he returned it. Surrendering of titles was included as one of the items in the non-co-operation movement. This was the first time in India that an order of Government was defied and disobeyed by Gandhiji. This was the beginning in India of the Passive Resistance Movement which Gandhiji had practiced with some success in South Africa. It was a precursor of the mass Civil Disobedience Movement started by Gandhiji from 1919 onwards. It is during these weeks in April, 1917 in his stay at Muzaffarpur, Motihari and Champanan that Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Acharya J. B. Kripalani first came to know and meet Gandhiji and for ever afterwards worked with him as his devoted colleagues.

At the trial Gandhiji read the following statement :

“With the permission of the Court, I should like to make a brief statement to show why I have taken the very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order made under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In my humble opinion, it is a question of difference of opinion between the local administration and myself. I have come to this district with a view to rendering humanitarian and national service. I have come in response to a pressing invitation to render help to those royts who, it has been urged, are not being fairly treated by the Indigo planters. I could not, however, be of any help without personally studying the problem. I have, therefore, come to study it with the assistance, if possible, of the Administration and of the planters. I have no other motive. I cannot believe that my coming can, in any way, disturb public peace and cause loss of life. I claim to have considerable experience in such matters. The Administration, however, have thought differ-

ently. I fully appreciate their difficulty. I admit too that they can only proceed upon such information as they receive. As a law-abiding citizen, my instinctive reaction would be to obey the order served upon me. I cannot, however, do so without violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I can serve them now only by remaining in their midst. I cannot, therefore, voluntarily retire. In this conflict between two duties, I have decided to throw on the Administration the responsibility of removing me from the midst of the Kisans. I am fully aware of the fact that a person, holding the kind of position I do in the public life of India, needs must be very careful in setting an example. It is my firm belief that the only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is, in such circumstances as I find myself in, to do what I decided to do, that is to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience.

"I venture to make this statement, not because I want to plead for any mitigation of the penalty to be imposed upon me, but because I want to show that I have disregarded the order served upon me, not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of my being, the Voice of my Conscience."

The Magistrate, the Public Prosecutor and the Court, including Gandhiji's friends, were dumb-founded by this Gandhian technique of pleading 'guilty'. The Magistrate did not know what to do. He adjourned the case for a week with a view to get instructions from the higher authorities.

C. F. Andrews had come to Champaran to say good-bye to Gandhiji before proceeding to Fiji. He saw the District Magistrate who told him that orders had been received from Government that the case against Gandhiji should be withdrawn and he should be allowed to conduct his enquiry. The formal order withdrawing the case was duly received. The enquiry thereupon proceeded.

The news of Gandhiji's success reverberated throughout the length and breadth of the country and Gandhiji, the leader of the South African fame, became overnight one of the foremost leaders of the Indian political mass agitation. Gandhiji was right in offering individual passive resistance against a bad order. The

British Commercial community and the British Government in India were working hand-in-hand and Government felt that any enquiry against the misdeeds of the British Commercial community was an attack on Government amounting to treason. The conditions under which Champaran ryots were working were on par with slave conditions—cruel, brutal and inhuman—too terrible to describe and their emoluments were far too low. The white indigo planters got panicky and saw red at any attempt at investigation of the existing conditions and the Government officials rushed to their rescue. But the First World War was raging at its fiercest and as King George V said: “The end was not in sight”. That is why Government could not afford an internal political storm raging in India.

It is essential for historical records that a true picture should be given of the early days of Gandhiji's career in India before he came to be called “Mahatma”. Fortunately for me, it was my privilege over forty-five years ago to come into the very closest contact with both Dr. Annie Besant and Gandhiji. I met Gandhiji in 1917 soon after the internment of Annie Besant. Gandhiji used to come to Bombay and Ahmedabad from Champaran at frequent intervals and I used to meet him regularly and had long talks with him three or four times a week. I did not ‘belong’ to him but the work that I was doing in the Labour and Social fields was dear to him and I received great kindness and encouragement from him right till his tragic death in January, 1948.

In dealing with Gandhiji's 32 years in India (1915 to 1947), I may claim to have some advantage over other writers, more competent though they may be, because I can write more freely than they. I never came under the hypnotic influence of Gandhiji.

After his return from Champaran in October, 1917, Gandhiji was asking for volunteers to go to Champaran for social work, which included removal of night soil from the streets. He asked me to go and I well remember the answer I gave him that having undertaken work in the Home Rule League, I could not go to Champaran. I added that I could not fit myself into his philosophy of life.

Lord Willingdon had nominated Gandhiji on the Beggars'

Relief Committee to suggest ways and means to reduce incidence of beggary in Bombay.

In 1918, Gandhiji was to open a temple in Walpakhadi, the municipal sweepers' colony near Mazagaon. It may sound absurd today, but it is a fact that no caste Hindu millionaire friend of Gandhiji would give him his car for this visit to the Bhangi Colony; the prejudice against the depressed classes (now called Harijan) was so deep then. I took Gandhiji in my car and he smilingly asked me if I would take a bath of purification after returning from the Bhangi Colony because of my touching the untouchable Bhangis. I told him that every day when I returned home in the evening, I had a shower but that day I would not do so to make sure that no superstition against the depressed classes might contribute to that day's bath. It is necessary to mention that in those years, basket privies still prevailed in most parts of the City, the flush system not being in operation right till the middle twenties and the Walpakhadi sweepers' duty was to clean up these privies and to remove the rubbish in conical baskets about 4 feet long carried on their heads.

Anusuyaben and Shankerlal made vigorous efforts to improve the wage-scales and other conditions of work of Ahmedabad Cotton Textile workers. The reactionary mill-owners remained obdurate and decided to reduce the wages by withdrawing the 90 per cent plague bonus. This latter was given to the workers to induce them to remain at work in Ahmedabad where plague was raging. This concession they now threatened to withdraw. Anusuyaben and Shankerlal sought Gandhiji's intervention. After looking into the problem, Gandhiji decided that the workers should get 35 per cent plague bonus; negotiations were set afoot between Gandhiji and mill-owners.

On 12th March, 1918, Mrs. Besant was in Ahmedabad. Ambalal gave a dinner at which both Besant and Gandhiji were guests. Before dinner, there was a discussion on the labour situation. Gandhiji, pointing at Ambalal, told Mrs. Besant that these mill-owners were trying to crush the labourers. Ambalal retorted: "Gandhiji and his friends want to crush the mill-owners". Mrs. Besant asked Gandhiji and Ambalal if they would like her to suggest to Government to intervene in the dispute. Gandhiji said: "No. We do not want Government intervention or interference at all. The mill-owners and I are carrying on

negotiations in a friendly spirit. Mrs. Besant said that this sounded very strange.

Contrast this attitude of Gandhiji then with the Government's policy today of intervening in labour disputes by legislation and pressure in season and out of season.

It was unusual for Gandhiji and Mrs. Besant to attend dinner parties and this was a very rare occasion.

Unfortunately, the workers in some mills went on unauthorised strike. Taking advantage of this, the mill-owners abruptly ended the negotiations and declared lock-out. To keep up the morale of the striking workers, Gandhiji issued bulletins and held daily meetings with the workers. He asked the workers to depend on their soul-force and said "the success would be theirs". Starvation was at the workers' door-steps and they clamoured for strike-doles on the lines of what was happening in such cases in U.S.A. and U.K. It was impossible, then as now, to give strike-doles to workers; so Gandhiji remonstrated with the workers that they could not expect to get any financial help to continue the strike and they must depend entirely on their soul-force. Workers complained that it was easy for Gandhiji to ask them to depend on their soul-force whilst they were starving as he himself was well-dressed and well-fed, but they had nothing to eat and their families were starving. That did it. Stung by these remarks, Gandhiji, on the spur of the moment, took a vow to fast unto death unless the mill-owners conceded the workers' demands and to give up wearing clothes except for a loin cloth.

This weapon of fasting and hunger-strike in season and out of season Gandhiji used right till a fortnight before his passing away in January, 1948.

To come back to this fast, it created a stir in the whole country. Mrs. Besant wired to Ambalal Sarabhai beseeching him to come to terms with Gandhiji and thus to save Gandhiji's life.

The Ahmedabad mill-owners gave way, because they did not want to take the responsibility of Gandhiji's passing away as a result of his 'fast unto death' vow. Gandhiji had to agree to a compromise settlement not getting all that he wanted immediately but the principle of arbitration was established in the Ahmedabad Cotton Textile Industry.



In Bombay, one morning I found Gandhiji shaving with a long but broken blade, not a safety razor, without using soap, but only water. I remonstrated with him and suggested use of soap would make shaving less troublesome. He said soap was not necessary! Miss Manu Gandhi, his grand-niece, who was looking after Gandhiji during his last years and was sixteen in 1947-48, writes in her "Last Glimpses of Bapu" (Story of Gandhiji's last thirty days) that she used to shave Gandhiji every day whilst he was having his bath in a tub and that after the shave and the bath, Gandhiji was fast asleep in the tub!

Indulal Yajnik, in his illuminating auto-biography in Gujarati, relates an amusing shaving experiment by Gandhiji in Yeraoda jail in 1923. The jail authorities, always courteous and respectful to Gandhiji, were perturbed by news from outside leaking into jail and news from jail being leaked outside the jail. They, therefore, decided to change the ward-boys at frequent intervals. Even this did not stop the news being leaked at both ends. Then they found that the person responsible for the leakage was the proverbial walking news-gazette, the barber. He was replaced by another barber. This latter, after a week's work, pretended insanity and had to be removed. The third barber refused to carry on his work in Gandhiji's ward. Not daunted, Gandhiji asked the jail authorities to give him clippers. He asked his jail companion Manzar Ali to remain unshaved for about six days. Gandhiji then experimented on Manzar Ali by shaving him with the clippers. The result was disastrous, because poor Manzar Ali bled all over his face. Gandhiji made the same experiment on himself with the same disastrous painful result—bleeding. The clippers were returned to the jail authorities and the razor was re-introduced.

Gandhiji had to face another problem after the Ahmedabad labour trouble. The peasants of Kheda district in the Bombay Presidency because of the Government's refusal to remit land revenue on account of failure of crops due to drought came into conflict with the local administration. The Gujrat Sabha of which Gandhiji was President took a leading part in this agitation. Gandhiji asked for a Committee of Enquiry to assess the damage to the crops. But this was refused. Jinnah and Gokaldas Kahandas Parekh saw the Revenue Member in Bombay to ask for this Committee of Enquiry but they too failed. Govern-

ment went on with their threat of confiscation of lands of those who failed to pay the land revenue. Gandhiji asked the peasants to refuse to pay the land revenue. Before the no-tax campaign was launched, a small meeting of friends of Gujarat was held in Bombay, at which I was present. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, five years older than Gandhiji sharply rebuked Gandhiji for his suggestion of no-tax campaign. Gandhiji took this scolding as he said quietly without protest as coming from a senior colleague with a long standing. But Gandhiji did not give way and went ahead with his no-tax campaign. This was the first agrarian Satyagraha organised by Gandhiji. He did not succeed and Gandhiji as a face-saving device called off the no-tax campaign to avoid further misery to the poor ryots. This agitation brought Vallabhbhai in the political field as a trusted and fearless lieutenant of Gandhiji. Vallabhbhai gave up his legal practice and became a right-hand man of Gandhiji. This agitation also created a feeling of fearlessness which soon spread all over the country.

As the War was not going well yet, the Viceroy convened a War Conference in Delhi in June 1918. Tilak, Mrs. Besant, Jinnah and Khaparde were not invited. Montague considered it a mistake on the part of Government not to have invited Tilak "that biggest leader in India at this moment". Gandhiji also protested at the exclusion of Tilak, Mrs. Besant, Mohamad Ali and Showkat Ali. He at first refused to attend the Conference if they were not invited but later allowed himself to be persuaded by the Viceroy and his Private Secretary, Maffey, to change his view. Many meetings were held under the auspices of the Home Rule Leagues throughout the country protesting against the exclusion of prominent Home Rulers such as Tilak and Mrs. Besant from the Delhi Conference. Sir Charles Munro, Commander-in-Chief, later stated that Tilak's and Mrs. Besant's names were included by the Government of India in the list of persons to be invited but the Governments of Bombay and Madras made their own selections! On April 22, 1918, a Manifesto signed by Tilak, Annie Besant, Dr. Subramania Aiyar, Kasturi Ranga Aiyangar, Rangaswami Aiyangar, Vithalbhai Patel, Jinnah, S. R. Bomanji, Motilal Ghosh, C. R. Das, Hasan Imam, Khaparde and many others was sent to the Government of India and England. This Manifesto, in vigorous but

restrained language, declared the national view that if India was to make great sacrifices in the Empire, it must be as a partner in the Empire and not a dependency.

Sir William Vincent, Home Member, was rude to Gandhiji and sharply told him that instead of helping the war effort, Gandhiji was only harassing the Administration in the Bombay Presidency. At the War Conference, Gandhiji supported the resolution on recruiting in one simple sentence spoken in Hindi.

On return from the War Conference in Delhi, Gandhiji threw himself whole-hog in the recruiting campaign and with Vallabhbhai he toured in Kaira and other districts. He could not get a single recruit for the War. In fact people resented his recruiting campaign and refused even to meet him and Vallabhbhai. The people of Gujarat completely non-co-operated with him and not infrequently, they were unable to get carts for their journeys. They had to walk twenty miles a day and at the outskirts of villages, they had to cook their own food.

All this strain—physical and mental—told on Gandhiji's health and he suffered from an acute attack of dysentery. He would not take any medicines or injections. Ambalal Sarabhai took him to his house in Ahmedabad but while still suffering from high fever he went to stay at his Sabarmati Ashram. Gandhiji thought that he was going to die and resigned in spirit to the approaching end. He recited verses from the Gita and summoned the inmates of the Ashram and told them: "My last message to India is that she will find her salvation through non-violence and through non-violence alone India will contribute to the salvation of the world."

He cured himself by ice-therapy. Kasturba persuaded him to take *goat's* milk on the plea that the vow he had taken many years before not to take milk applied only to cow's milk. Gandhiji knew that this was just a quibble and he admits in his autobiography: "The will to live proved stronger than the devotion to truth".

## CHAPTER X

### ROWLATT ACT SATYAGRAHA: GANDHIJI AND MRS. BESANT: AMRITSAR AND AFTER

LORD CHELMSFORD, most of the Governors and the Bureaucracy had mental reservations about Montague's announcement of August, 1917 offering responsible Government to India. They could never believe that India could ever reach the stage of responsible self-Government. In their madness and blindness, they fondly believed that the mighty Imperialist British Raj would continue in India till eternity. But fearing that the British would have to make some concessions to India, Chelmsford and his Government followed the traditional dual British policy of reforms *cum* repression, that is to say take away by the left hand what is conceded by the right. Even while busy drawing up the Reforms scheme, Lord Chelmsford appointed a Committee to advise the Government of India whether any legislation was necessary to enable them to deal effectively with the revolutionary movement in India. The Defence of India Act would automatically lapse after the end of the War and it was, therefore, felt necessary to rearm the Government with similar power during the post-war period. The Committee, with Mr. Justice Rowlatt, was appointed on 10th Dec. 1917, a month after the arrival of Montague in India and it submitted its report on 15th April, 1918, a week before Montague and Chelmsford submitted their Report. The Rowlatt Report was published on July 19, 1918, only eleven days after the Montague-Chelmsford Report. Who can say today whether these timings were the result of a deliberate diabolical plan of the British Bureaucracy in India to sabotage the intention of the British Government in U.K. to take a step forward in meeting India's political demands? Who also can say to what extent the British Commercial community in India was in league with the Bureaucracy? The Bill prepared on the basis of the Report of the Rowlatt Commission kindled a fire which consumed to a great extent hopes

of fair trial of the Reforms proposals. This Bill introduced early in 1919, provoked universal opposition in India, inside the Legislative Council and outside. India spoke with one voice against the Bills. In the Council, Surendranath Bannerjea, Srinivas Sastri, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jinnah and Vithalbhai Patel spoke vehemently. Surendranath Bannerjea called upon the members of the British Commercial community not to support the Bill. Sastri endorsed this appeal. He thought that the Bill was being enacted at the time because of the fear of the European Community in India losing their privileged status under the new Reforms and of the difficulty of enacting such law under the new dispensation. Jinnah said that a government which enacted such a law in peace forfeited its claim to be called a civilized government. Sapru described the laws as 'wrong in principle, unsound in operation and too sweeping'. Vithalbhai Patel said: "All our constitutional agitation for any reforms whatsoever will die if these bills are passed."

The Bill was passed with an indecent hurry by the Viceroy by suspending the Rules of Business.

To come back to Gandhiji, he was seriously ill and in the end he permitted himself to be operated upon on 21st January for piles. While still unconscious and under the effect of chloroform he went on murmuring: "Government must abolish the salt tax and secondly it must nationalise milk etc." It was only 28 years later—in February, 1947, that salt tax was abolished by the Interim Ministry of Nehru with Liaquat Ali as Finance Member. To Liaquat Ali, the righthand man of Jinnah and later Prime Minister of Pakistan goes the credit of fulfilling Gandhiji's wish. It has to be admitted that the removal of the salt tax has brought no relief to the starving millions of India. All that it has meant is to deprive the exchequer of crores of rupees of revenue. One can only hope that the future Finance Minister will have the strength and the courage to reimpose this tax. The Government of Maharashtra's Aarey Colony for milk, to be followed by similar colonies in other places, is answer to the sacred wish expressed by Gandhiji during his unconsciousness.

From the very next day of the operation, he started writing letters to friends all over India opposing the Rowlatt Bills. To Sastri he wrote: "Though I have not left my bed, I feel I can no longer watch the progress of the Bills lying in bed. To me the

Bills are the aggravated symptoms of the deep-seated disease. They are a striking demonstration of the determination of the Civil Service to retain its grip of our necks. I consider the Bills to be an open challenge to us.....". Mrs. Besant called on Gandhiji on 29th January, to enquire after his health. She suggested to Gandhiji to join the Deputation to England to give evidence before the Joint Select Committee. Gandhiji said that he would only go as an independent member. Mrs. Besant immediately accepted this condition and added: "We can take you as an independent member. Why don't you join our Home Rule League deputation?" She asked for Gandhiji's reply before the 14th February. Pandit Malwiya, the Congress President, also pressed on Gandhiji to join the Congress Deputation. Gandhiji said it would be better if Congress did not send any deputation, because the men whom the Congress had selected would bring discredit to India.

Mrs. Besant, in a series of articles in "New India" as well as on the platform strongly opposed the Rowlatt Bills. She said: "If the present attempt at unprecedented coercion were stopped, and the kindlier feelings towards India shown during the War were allowed to prevail, the atmosphere would change. At present things are very black."

On the 28th March, five days after the passing of the Rowlatt Bill, Jinnah wrote to the Viceroy, accusing the Government of India of having "ruthlessly trampled upon the principles for which Great Britain avowedly fought the War." He considered that the passing of the Act 'clearly demonstrated' that the Imperial Legislative Council was a 'legislature but in name—a machine propelled by a foreign Executive'. As a protest, he tendered his resignation and ended his letter with the hope that 'this Black Act' would be annulled. According to Jayakar, the Rowlatt Act "set aside all requirements of fairness and justice". It placed infinite power in the hands of the police and of the executives so that "even an energetic criticism of a Government measure, a religious riot, a Hindu-Muslim quarrel, might all come to be recognised as having connected with a revolutionary movement". It gave no right of appeal, and an accused person was not allowed the services of a pleader. Furthermore, Jayakar said in his auto-biography: "The authority charged with the responsibility of enforcing the Act was not to disclose to the person

concerned any fact, the communication of which might engender public safety or the safety of an individual. He was compelled to submit to a trial without the protection of a single one of the safeguards which civilised countries adopt for his protection, and in making the enquiry, the authority, acting under the Act, was not bound by any of the provisions of the law of evidence."

It will thus be seen that there was universal opposition to the Rowlatt Act from all over India, from all shades of political opinion. Not one whisper was heard in favour of the Rowlatt Act except from the Government and the British Commercial community. Government could not have withstood this All-India opposition, and the Black Act, as the Rowlatt Act came to be known, would have been a dead letter. Gandhiji was advised to take a three months' holiday to recoup from the effects of his serious operation, and he thought of a sea-voyage which would give him complete rest and would help him to recover. But this was not to be. Instead he threw an apple of discord in the political arena by talking in terms of passive resistance and civil disobedience. By his talk of passive resistance, etc. Gandhiji split the united opposition to the Rowlatt Act into two and those who did not join Gandhiji's movement were dubbed traitors and cowards!

Disturbed by Gandhiji's reference to starting a movement of breaking laws, Mrs. Besant unexpectedly arrived in Bombay at 6 in the morning of 14th February. I met her at the station. She asked me to fix an appointment for her to meet Gandhiji. She was leaving for Madras again that very night—this meant four days' continuous night travel by train. I saw Gandhiji at 9; he was jumping in his bed with terrible pain. I told him that Mrs. Besant had arrived earlier in the morning from Madras and wanted to meet him. He said he was too ill to go and see Mrs. Besant. I told him she knew this and, therefore, she had suggested that she would go and see Gandhiji at his house, second floor, Laburnum Road. Gandhiji said: "No, no. I cannot agree to this. How can the old lady walk up to the second floor?" I chipped him: "Look here, you know Mrs. Besant as much as I do. You know she will not take 'No' from me about seeing you. She has come down to Bombay only to see you and she is leaving again tonight for Madras. I cannot go back to her till I have

fixed up with you the appointment. Therefore, all that I want from you is the time for this meeting". Gandhiji laughed in spite of his pain and he fixed 3 p.m. Mrs. Besant and I were one hour with him. She told Gandhiji she knew he was ill and, therefore, she would do all the talking and would not cause him any strain. She wanted Gandhiji to listen to her and not get exhausted by talking. Gandhiji, lying in bed, nodded his agreement. She told him of the dangers of mass civil disobedience movement. She had vast enough experience in her life of 72 years of the dangers of exciting mob frenzy, which, once excited, could not be controlled. She told him where Gandhiji's movement of civil disobedience would lead to, burning of post-offices, cutting of telegraph wires, loss of respect for law and order rioting and every kind of violent upheaval. Gandhiji did not agree and said he would go ahead with his plan.

Here I must record a personal experience. About 15th May, 1919, two or three days before she sailed for England as the President and leader of the National Home Rule League Delegation to give evidence before the Montague Bill Joint Select Committee of the Parliament, I had tea with her, along with three or four friends. The conversation was of a general nature. As she handed over to me my cup of tea, a thought passed in my mind, but which I did not express in words. This was the thought: "Whether when she talked to Gandhiji on 14th February, she had seen clairvoyantly the events of the last three months: she had foretold the rioting, mob violence, burning of post-offices and telegraph offices, etc., in different parts of the country."

After tea, she took me aside and said: "My dear, it was not clairvoyance, it was political experience that made me feel what was likely to happen and I had to express my fear to Gandhiji frankly" Mrs. Besant 'read' my thought and answered it!

In 1920, she told Gandhiji when he was once again contemplating civil disobedience movement that the day of victory for India (that is when India attained self-government and freedom) would be the biggest day of defeat for Gandhiji because the spirit of lawlessness, resulting in loss of respect for law, which he was inculcating through civil disobedience, would react against the Indian Government and people would disobey authority on the lines taught to them by Gandhiji. Her words



have come too true ! !

Before leaving for Madras on the night of 14th February, Mrs. Besant was one of the principal speakers at a mass meeting of over 10,000 at Shantaram's Chawl to protest against the proposed Rowlatt Bill. She voiced her fears and anxiety about the proposed movement of disobedience of laws. This speech was not well received by a section of the audience and the next day Horniman criticised Mrs. Besant.

Gandhiji sent on the 27th February, to the Indian Press the new Satyagraha Pledge approved in a meeting in Ahmedabad on 24th February, with a covering letter.

My Home Rule League friends, Umar Sobani, Shankerlal Banker and my brother Jamnadas, were anxious that we should obtain Mrs. Besant's blessings for our joining Gandhiji's new Satyagraha Sabha and sign the Satyagraha Pledge. They said that this pledge, as drafted by Gandhiji, would not be objected to by Mrs. Besant as it did not envisage mass civil disobedience movement, disobeying any or all laws. The implications of the pledge were that the movement was to be not mass indiscriminate civil disobedience but restricted individual passive resistance. My friends suggested I should go to Adyar to explain the new situation to Mrs. Besant and my mission was approved by Gandhiji. I left Bombay for Adyar (Madras) on the 26th February. I was asked to make it clear to her that a small sub-Committee of five experts including Gandhiji, P. K. Telang, and three equally responsible experienced men, would decide on the laws to be broken, and that the movement would be restricted to a few selected individuals and that the man in the street would not be called upon to make a mass civil disobedience movement, which would lead to constant breaches of law, rioting, shooting, etc. Mrs. Besant approved of this limited disobedience. This was when she had taken me from the New India Office to Y. M. I. A. for a cup of coffee. Jinrajdas was also with us and before returning to Adyar, she drove me to the Telegraph Office so that I could send a telegram to Umar Sobani giving a short report of my talks with Mrs. Besant. That afternoon she had convened a meeting at the New India Office of about 15 political leaders of all shades of opinion. Most of them were almost double my age. She introduced me to all of them and called upon me to explain my

mission. Not being accustomed to making speeches, this was a nightmare for me. But, I had to say a few words. I said that I had explained my mission to Mrs. Besant and she would kindly give it in detail to the meeting! Mrs. Besant then did the rest to my great relief. That night—2nd March—I left for Bombay.

On 3rd March evening, as I reached Sholapur, I received the following telegram from Mrs. Besant:

“To Kanji Dwarkadas

Madras 1st Class Passenger, Madras-Bombay Mail, Sholapur Chronicle Saturday publishes all. I arrive Bombay Friday.”

The full story has to be told. On arrival in Bombay, I understood the significance of Mrs. Besant's telegram. Gandhiji at a meeting of his newly formed Satyagraha Sabha, explained the implications of his limited passive resistance movement. He emphasized that those who took the pledge should also pledge themselves to speak the truth and nothing but the truth. He said the movement had to depend on soul force. Horniman protested. He opposed the condition in the pledge to speak the truth. Being a news-paper editor (he was Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*) he said, he could not always speak and write the truth. L. R. Tairsee asked what soul force had to do with politics and breaking of laws. He cynically ridiculed Gandhiji by asking if he could buy Gandhiji's soul force at a grocer's shop! (Gandhi in Gujrati means a grocer). Tairsee added that he would pay four annas for Gandhiji's soul force. This criticism and ridicule hurt and upset Gandhiji. Horniman and other speakers asked why the movement should be restricted to a few selected individuals and also objected to a committee of experts to decide what laws to break. Gandhiji was unnerved. The report of this meeting was published by the *Bombay Chronicle* in its issue of 1st March and it reached Mrs. Besant on 3rd March morning. Hence the telegram to me at Sholapur. The report said that Gandhiji was at a meeting of his satyagrahi friends outvoted in regard to his promised restricted passive resistance movement and a resolution was passed supporting mass civil disobedience of any laws by any and everybody. Gandhiji forgetting his original intention and promise, accepted this resolution.

This led to the final break between Mrs. Besant and Gandhiji 1919, to my mind, was the black year for India.

She left Madras on the 3rd night, arrived in Bombay on the 5th morning. I met her at the station. Whilst I was away, Umar Sobani, Shankerlal and Jamnadas had already signed the pledge amended at the Satyagraha Sabha meeting. In the evening, she spoke to an audience of over 10000 at the Shantaram's Chawl, boldly voicing her opposition to Gandhiji's movement. In so doing, she lost her great popularity with the Indian people. Horniman severely criticised her in an editorial next morning.. This did not worry her. But Gandhiji and his friends never forgot her opposition and never forgave her. They realised that she was much too strong to be ignored and, therefore, they wanted to punish her by getting her out of public life. Her further argument was as she pointed out in a letter dated 21st March, addressed jointly to P. K. Telang, Jamnadas and myself and brought to Bombay by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, that as the clauses of the Rowlatt Bills that could be disobeyed had disappeared from the Act as finally passed (18th March) there was nothing to disobey.

Telang and I had never signed the Satyagraha Pledge as we had thoroughly accepted her point of view.

Gandhiji forgot all about his intention to take a sea voyage for three months to recoup his health. Instead, he undertook a long tour of South India. In his speeches in Madras, Tanjore, Bezwada, etc., he explained that his Satyagraha movement was based on religion. He gathered support from the masses on the basis of his movement being religious. In this connection, I should like to refer to what the late Aga Khan told Lady Minto. Lady Minto writes (India: Minto and Morley, 1905-1910): "The Aga Khan arrived to stay with us today (9th Feb. 1910). He seems to have had a trimphant progress through India amongst the Moslems. He says that the only real way to appeal to the feelings of Natives is by means of the superstitions of their religion, and consequently he has instructed the priests in every mosque to issue a decree that any Muhamedans who incite to rebellion, or go about preaching sedition, will be eternally damned. He suggested that a similar manifesto should be issued by the Hindus, as if doubts were thrown upon their prospects of happiness in a future state, it might have a deterring effect".

I am sure Gandhiji never knew of this cynical advice of the Aga Khan to use religious superstitions for keeping the masses loyal to the British Raj: But Gandhiji used the same vehicle of religious superstitions to make a mass movement of disobedience and disruption against the British Raj.

He, therefore, talked in terms of fasts, sea-baths, vows, prayers, etc., to fulfil his political objects. He told Rajaji who met him for the first time in Madras in March, 1919, that the decision to have a hartal and a fast came to him in a flash in the twilight of the morning as he woke up. What he meant was that it was intuition, inner voice or God speaking to him to make the decision. This kind of phraseology Gandhiji used right till the end of his life to achieve his immediate political ends. Many times, as will be shown later, he confessed that he was mistaken in considering his impulse as the "Voice of God". Throughout his political career, Gandhiji acted on the impulse of the moment. Louis Fischer has pointed out: "Gandhiji did not think first and then acted; but he acted first and then thought."

I have to answer this question:

How is it that in spite of his political blunders, which he himself described as "Himalayan miscalculations" he carried the people of India with him and earned the title "The Father of the Nation"? The answer is in a short sentence: He played cleverly on the religious superstition of the ignorant and poverty-stricken millions of India and he got away with it. Whether this was consciously or unconsciously done, I cannot say. But I must assert that Gandhiji, shrewd as he was, was fully conscious of the hold he had on the people of India because of his insistence on prayers and religion all the time. Gandhiji also had a great capacity of make-believism and he made himself believe whenever it suited him to believe. Gandhiji created a new religion of make-believism. One definite and clear example I must give in support of what I am saying. During the last few years of his life, every evening he held "prayer meetings"! He was the only speaker and he made mostly political speeches. In the very last meeting he addressed in Birla House on 29th January, 1948, 24 hours before he was assassinated, he scolded the people of Madras for complaining about the shortage of food. The non-violent, vegetarian, Gandhiji told them that they had only to stretch out their hands and they would get as much fish as they wanted.

from the sea. On the 27th October, 1947, at his prayer meeting, the non-violent Gandhiji praised Nehru for having acted in good time by sending air-borne troops to Kashmir to fight and push back out of Kashmir the frontier tribes who had attacked Kashmir.

One question I will pose to the psychologists. In what way was chloroform which was administered to him before his operation on 21st January, 1919, and his serious painful illness at that time responsible for his decision to launch a civil disobedience movement. He had not recovered the normalcy of his mind, brain, emotions and body when he decided to launch the civil disobedience movement against Rowlatt Act. I cannot answer this question. The psychologists, perhaps can.

C. R. Das was a great intellectual; a great criminal lawyer but also he was emotional. I knew him well and I liked him. I, however, never suspected that there was a religious streak in his emotional approach to politics. But it was so. Addressing a mammoth meeting in Calcutta on the evening of 6th April, 1919, he said: "Satyagraha is spiritual force. It is the power of love. With love we shall conquer the self. We shall give up selfishness, hatred and envy and shall be self-controlled. This is no doubt the message of Mahatma Gandhi but it is the time-honoured message of India, the message of Prahlad, Meera Bai and Vasishtha. The Rowlatt Act is an obstacle to the movement for freedom. We cannot attain freedom unless we remove the obstacle. For that we have to enkindle love for our country, we have to be satyagrahis and give up hatred and envy. Rise, brothers, prepare yourselves and rest assured that the goal cannot be attained by persons of weak mettle".

I make no apology for digressing a little from my story as this business of religious superstition was 'a ruling passion' of Gandhiji. He exploited it to its utmost capacity not only in his fight against Government but also to checkmate his political opponents, who ventured to express their disagreement with Gandhiji. Gandhiji was far too shrewd not to understand the value of this tactics as a powerful weapon in his armoury.

In regard to what I have said above, it would be relevant to quote Rushbrook Williams:

"Mr. Gandhi, who is probably more widely known throughout the world than any other individual living in

India today, has for the major portion of his life been convinced that modern civilization is a mistake. He believes, like his master, the late Count Tolstoy, that the vast social and economic structure built upon the scientific discoveries of the 19th Century is pernicious in its effect upon the individual man. He conceives that modern education develops in those subject to its influence the mentality of a slave; that all the machinery of complex civilization—hospitals, doctors, law courts, railways, parliaments—do but serve to increase the gulf between man and God. The sole end of rightly directed human activity, according to Mr. Gandhi, is the freedom of the individual soul; and anything which, by adding to the complexity of life, threatens to hinder that freedom, is by nature bad. Mr. Gandhi believes that the only rule by which man can attain natural and primitive simplicity, which in his eyes ranks so far above economic, political and industrial advance, lies in the mastery by spiritual force of material might. The weapon of passive resistance therefore appeals to him strongly, whether as a means of securing national regeneration through the conquest by love of evil powers; or as an irresistible lever for the redress of grievances suffered by a people at the hands of its Government. For long he had enjoyed among his Hindu co-religionists the authority with which India envelops a saintly ascetic. Further, much of his doctrine was akin to orthodox Hindu practice. His insistence upon the supremacy of soul force, his advocacy of national fasting as a means of influencing Government, his conviction of the irresistible power of passive resistance, have all three their basis in the ancient Hindu doctrine *Dharma*."

In assessing the reasons for the unbearable hold over his countrymen that Gandhiji so soon came to possess, one may give due weight to the nature of his programme and especially to the religious appeal that his mode of life and thought undoubtedly exercised; but above all there was his own magnetic personality. He always cast a spell to which few including myself who met him were able to remain insensible, whether they agreed with him or not.

Gandhiji sums up his philosophy in the following words: "It is not the British people who are ruling India but it is mod-

ern civilization, through its railways, telegraph, telephone, and almost every invention which has been claimed to be a triumph of civilization. Bombay, Calcutta, and the other chief cities of India are the real plague-spots. If British rule were replaced tomorrow by Indian rule based on modern methods, India would be no better off, except that she would be able to retain some of the money that is drained away to England; but then India would only become a second or fifth nation of Europe or America. Medical science is the concentrated essence of black magic. Quackery is infinitely preferable to what passes for high medical skill as such. Hospitals are the instruments that the Devil has been using for his own purpose, in order to keep his hold on its Kingdom. They perpetuate vice, misery and degradation and real slavery..... If there were no hospitals for venereal diseases or even for consumptives, we should have less consumption and less sexual vice amongst us. India's salvation consists in unlearning what she has learnt during the past fifty years or so. The railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors and such like have all to go".

To give an example. Gandhiji saw the devil in the machine. While laying the foundation of the Bhakra Dam some years ago, Prime Minister Nehru said that the only time he felt religious was when he saw heavy machinery working. The Government of India and the State Government have a vast programme of building hospitals; and the much-needed medical relief in this form is increasing day by day.

Gandhiji was opposed to science and technological education. Nehru and President Radhakrishnan, the philosopher statesman, have never missed an opportunity to emphasize the need of science and technological education in India. The difference between them and Gandhiji is that while Gandhiji, twenty and eighteen years respectively, older than Nehru and Radhakrishnan belonged to go-back-to-nature cowdung age, Nehru and Radhakrishnan belong to the jet age.

This interlude about Gandhiji's philosophy is necessary for the guidance of students of history.

I shall now return to the events of March-April, 1919. In response to Gandhiji's appeal, Delhi observed Hartal on 30th March. This led to shooting by Government on unruly mobs,

causing several casualties. Writing on 5th April to C. F. Andrews, Gandhiji gloated over the shedding of blood of the 'innocents': and for the first time called the Government "satanic". He asked Andrews to join his (Gandhi's) civil disobedience movement. C. F. Andrews did not oblige.

On 6th April, Bombay observed a complete hartal. The day started with over 2,00,000 people having a sea-bath. Gandhiji had also enjoined a complete fast on that day. P. K. Telang and I were present at the Chowpatty seaface but did not fast. After the bath Gandhiji led the procession to the Madhav Baug temple. I did not join the procession. The leaders then went to the Muslim Masjid at Grant Road and from inside the masjid, Gandhiji, Mrs. Naidu and Jamnadas addressed the cosmopolitan crowd. Jamnadas had then left Mrs. Besant's Home Rule League and joined Gandhiji's Satyagraha movement. The day passed peacefully. There were no disturbances. But the demonstrations made George Lloyd, the Bombay Governor, angry. He wired to the Viceroy at Simla on 7th April:

"Yesterday's demonstrations were large. Owing, however to the knowledge of the presence of a military force they passed off quietly. . . . it will almost certainly be necessary for me to proceed against Gandhi and others . . . . but in view of the fact that such action may result in considerable disturbance here and possibly elsewhere, I consider it proper to inform you immediately and to deter taking action until I receive telegraphic intimation of the receipt of this telegram by you"

It is clear from this telegram that Lloyd was not asking for permission from the Government of India to take action against Gandhiji and others. He only considered it proper to inform the Viceroy of what he (Lloyd) had decided to do!

The Viceroy wired to the Secretary, Home Department, Delhi, on 8th April:

"Please see 'clear the line' telegram from H.E. the Governor of Bombay dated 7th April. I think it important that in order to deal with the possible development of the passive resistance movement a definite plan of action should be prepared at once".

The Home Secretary replied to the Viceroy on the 9th:



"In the opinion of O'Dwyer, the situation is now so serious that it is desirable that Gandhi should, under Regulation III of 1818, be deported to Burma. Vincent at any rate does not agree with O'Dwyer as to the expediency of deportation..... In Egypt recent doings show deportation might cause general conflagration..... After consulting Sir James Meston and Sir George Lowndes, the Home Member has telegraphed to the Punjab and the United Provinces Governments and the Chief Commissioner Delhi sanctioning the issue by them of an order directing Gandhi to remain in Bombay Presidency.....'

The Secretary, Home Department, Government of India, wired to the Chief Secretary, Bombay Government on April 12:

"In connection with His Excellency the Governor's (Sir George Lloyd's) conversation with His Excellency the Viceroy regarding the deportation of Horniman, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, Sobhani, Mrs. Naidu, Sathe, Banker, Jinnah and Gandhi..... If however they (the Govt. of Bombay) consider this action to be essential for peace and safety of the Bombay Presidency, the Govt. of India will support them. Government of India doubt the expediency of including Jinnah and they think that Gandhi should not be deported unless some further occurrences take place which render it unavoidable....."

The intention to arrest the Bombay leaders had gone far enough for the Viceroy to wire to the Governor of Burma on 12th April: "It is probable that I shall deport in the immediate future some six persons from Bombay area. I hope you will assist by accepting charge of them....." On 7th April, Gandhiji started publication of an unauthorised weekly "Satyagrahi" in defiance of the Press Act. This was the beginning of his movement of breaking laws. On 8th April, he left for Delhi. But on the next evening, 9th April, before he reached Delhi, he was served with an order not to enter Delhi and the Punjab and to live within the Bombay Presidency. Gandhiji disobeyed the order, was arrested and was sent back to Bombay under police guard. On reaching Bombay on 11th April, he was released at about 1 P.M. He heard of the riot which had broken out at Pydhoni. He immediately started to go to the disturbed area to pacify the crowds. I along with two other friends, went with him. As

he reached the junction of Pydhoni and Kalbadevi, almost opposite the Police Station, he found that the crowds had gone completely out of control and were stoning the Police Station. There were deafening shouts. Glass windows were being smashed to pieces. Gandhiji's face looked terribly strained. This violent attack on the police station was not part of his non-violent civil disobedience movement! He got out of the car, stood on the foot-board and screamed nervously and in anguish as loud as he could to the people raising his hand शांत रहो (Keep peaceful). Mrs. Besant's words about mob violence were coming true and Gandhiji was a witness to it. The crowds responded, shouted back "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai" and hurled more stones on the mounted police and smashed more glass windows of the police station all the time repeating "Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai". Gandhiji walked into the police station and met the Police Commissioner Griffiths. The Commissioner told Gandhiji: "You cannot control the crowds and so unless I take strong measures to stop this violence, the situation will go completely out of hand and there will be more mob violence and blood-shed."

Gandhiji returned to the car and he went back to Laburnum Road, sad, puzzled, confused and crest-fallen.

Griffiths was a fair minded, considerate and conscientious Police Commissioner. In spite of the angry and violent provocation of the crowds, he did not resort to firing.

At a public meeting held that evening at Chowpatty Gandhiji read a message condemning that afternoon's riotous behaviour of the crowds which he said was Duragraha and not Satyagraha. He threatened that if such riotous behaviour on the part of the people continued he would have to offer Satyagraha against the people and take a vow of fasting.

Gandhiji's plan was to defy the Government order to remain in the Bombay Presidency by making an attempt once again to go to Delhi. By so defying the order, he wanted to court arrest but on hearing that serious disturbances had broken out in Ahmedabad, Nadiad, Viramgam and other places in the Bombay Presidency, he changed his programme and proceeded instead to Ahmedabad on 12th April evening.

Martial Law had been proclaimed and curfew was in force in Ahmedabad. Gandhiji saw the Commissioner Pratt and obtained permission to address a public meeting during the

non-curfew hours. He spoke to a crowd of 2000 at the Sabarmati Ashram. He said that for the misdeeds of the Ahmedabad crowds, he had to perform a Prayaschit (penance) by fasting for three days. After a few days Gandhiji returned to Bombay and met the Governor, Sir George Lloyd and had a stormy meeting with him. When I met George Lloyd in Poona, in June 1922 (Gandhiji was then in Yeraoda Jail serving a sentence of six years), he told me what Gandhiji and he had talked. He said: "Gandhi asked me to arrest him and send him to jail. I replied: Mr. Gandhi, I will arrest you when it suits me and not when it suits you. The time has not yet come for me to arrest you. etc." As Lloyd was talking to me, I felt that he was bluffing me. Lloyd was one of the worst types of British Imperialist Jingo-die-hardism. He was intelligent but full of low cunning, with ideas of racial superiority. He was an apt follower and pupil of Winston Churchill. He was autocratic and was too confident and too cock-sure of himself and had an over-exaggerated high opinion of himself. He overreached himself. He never understood human nature. His judgment was always wrong. He made serious mistakes later in his career, when he was High Commissioner in Egypt. For the first few months of the Second World War, he was in Rome and made confidential reports to the British Government that Mussolini would join the Allies in the War against Hitler. Even a third-standard school boy in India would have then said that Lloyd was wrong. But the stupid and ineffective British Government with Neville Chamberlain as the Prime Minister, lulled itself to sleep and accepted George Lloyd's reassuring report about Italy. Lloyd suffered from a diseased mentality for what sane man would have decided on the deportation, among others, of Jinnah? Jinnah's crime and sedition consisted of opposing the Rowlatt Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council as all non-official Indian members did and of resigning his seat in the Legislative Council. Equally stupid was Lord Chelmsford in acquiescing with Lloyd's decision for deportation and Lord Chelmsford went so far as to make arrangements with the Governor of Burma for taking charge of the deportees. However, Lloyd did not give effect to his decision to deport the eight men suggested by him to the Viceroy. Only Horniman was taken out of his sick bed in Worli and deported to England.

Government soon found out that Jinnah was opposed to Gandhiji's civil disobedience movement.

Mahadev Desai expressed to Gandhiji his fear that Government might arrest Gandhiji the very next day after he reached Ahmedabad. Gandhiji laughed and said Government would not have the courage to arrest him. Mahadev said that Pratt and William Vincent were devils, they were men without honour and they would shamelessly take to firing. Gandhiji agreed with Mahadev but maintained Government would not arrest him. Mahadev told Gandhiji what Reginald Craddock had said about him: "a misguided saint is more dangerous than a hundred agitators". Gandhiji replied it would be great fun if the Government resorted to firing.

Taking into consideration the reports of mob violence resulting in uprooting of railway tracks, burning of post and telegraph offices, cutting of telegraph wires and other unruly and disorderly behaviour, Gandhiji realised that he had underrated the latent forces of violence! He retraced his steps and suspended Satyagraha.

Mrs. Besant had already made herself unpopular in India by opposing Gandhiji's Rowlatt Act Satyagraha Civil Disobedience Movement and when mob violence broke out in different parts of the country as stated above, an editorial in *New India* said *inter alia*: "brickbats had to be met by bullets". Gandhiji and his friends and the Indian Press took strong objection to this statement and misrepresented Mrs. Besant as advocating shooting on the Indian crowds. They never forgave Mrs. Besant for this statement. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Besant was not in Madras on the day the editorial appeared in the paper. It was written by George Arundale. But Mrs. Besant took full responsibility and blame for the statement. This statement is simple enough. If the crowds take to rioting and violence, and destroy property and attack Police and the Military with stones and other missiles, are the Government, with their police and military, to sit with folded hands and permit violence to spread and get out of control? Nethercot has quoted Krishna Menon on this subject: "In certain matters, such as "Brickbats vs. Bullets" and Civil Disobedience, he (Krishna Menon) confessed she (Mrs. Besant) had been proved right; and he voluntarily added that the experience of the present Government (Indian Government

after Independence) had shown that she was correct in emphasizing the necessity of maintaining law and order by any responsible government".

A few days after Horniman's deportation was held the First All India Trade Union Congress at the Empire Theatre under the Presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai. Jawaharlal Nehru, N. M. Joshi, B. P. Wadia, Dewan Chamanlal, S. A. Brelvi and I were on the stage. Mrs. Ruttie Jinnah was sitting quietly in the side-box. A resolution protesting against Horniman being deported out of India was moved by her. She spoke fluently and faultlessly from the side-box for five minutes. This was the only public speech she ever made.

After the January 1919 Cotton Textile Strike in Bombay, I asked Gandhiji, whom I used to meet more or less regularly every day to help us in starting a good trade union for the Bombay Cotton Textile workers and to take up its leadership. He refused. He said he did not consider himself strong enough to handle and tackle the shrewd Maharashtrian workers of Bombay.

A few weeks later I made him another request to join the newly founded All India Trade Union Congress and to get the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress. Both these requests he turned down. His answer was characteristic of his policy and philosophy of isolationism. He said: "What have I in Ahmedabad to do with the All India Trade Union Congress and similarly what has the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association to do with the All India body?" This was a most unfortunate, wrong decision on Gandhiji's part, because his keeping away from it and not getting the Ahmedabad Textile Labour Association to join it, prevented the more sober opinion in labour circles from being heard in A.I.T.U.C. and left the field open to more extremist, wild and irresponsible leadership to capture the A.I.T.U.C. This has impeded for all time to come the growth of a healthy and genuine trade union movement in India.

In the meantime, the situation in the Punjab took a very serious turn. Punjab had provided 500,000 recruits for the World War I. Mrs. Besant then told me of the most atrocious, tyrannical, barbaric and inhuman methods employed by Sir Michael O'Dwyer and his agents to obtain these recruits.

O'Dwyer's methods were on the same lines as methods employed by the Communists in Telengana in Hyderabad before and after Hyderabad came under the direct rule and control of India in 1948. Other events made Punjab equally miserable and unhappy and the whole of the Punjab was like a volcano seething with discontent. Mrs. Besant later condemned the "harsh and oppressive rule of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, his methods of recruitment, his forced war-loans and his cruel persecution of all political leaders".

Majumdar writes: "Of the eleven lakhs and more of Indians recruited to the army during the war, quite a large number was forced by the most tyrannical methods adopted by Government officials, which, as Sir Michael O'Dwyer admitted, "amounted almost to conscription". Judges passed strong censure on the methods followed "to raise the war-loan and to find recruits". A quota of recruits and war-loan was fixed for each district in the Punjab, and woe befell the officers who failed to achieve the target. No wonder that they put the unfortunate people to the heaviest oppression in order to make them agree to subscribe to the war-loan and join the army. A Government official deposed in the open court that he heard a complaint to the effect that the Tahsildar, whose murder was the subject matter of the trial, made men to stand naked in the presence of their women-folk".

In May 1919, broke out the war between India and Afghanistan. India was always complaining against the heavy military expenses incurred by the Government of India, as this heavy expenditure meant an unbearable burden on the people of India. Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy that the Government of India would incur more military expenditure to fight the Afghan War but that India could not bear this heavy military expenditure. He, therefore, advised the Viceroy not to fight the Afghan tribesmen but to win them over by non-violence and love. The tribes, Gandhiji said, would come as far as Lahore and the Indians would meet them with folded hands and not resist them. The Tribesmen appreciating India's non-violence, would quietly return beyond the frontiers and there would be no need to incur any further military expenditure.

During this war, the tribesmen swept over the border tracts of the Derajat and Zhob and even penetrated into the Punjab,

robbing and murdering the peaceful villagers, and after signing of the Peace Treaty on 6th August, 1919, they became even more truculent and absolutely refused the lenient terms which were offered to them in the hope of avoiding a campaign. It is pertinent to ask what would have happened to Kashmir and to India if Prime Minister Nehru had followed Gandhiji's advice in October, 1947, when the same tribesmen, or rather their descendants, marched into Kashmir with the help of Pakistan. Instead, Nehru sent air-borne troops to Kashmir to throw out the invading tribesmen, helped by the Pakistani army. This time Gandhiji fully supported Nehru in this fight against the tribesmen giving a complete go-bye to his philosophy of non-violence and brotherly love.

Montague said in his diary (January, 1918) that O'Dwyer was "determined to maintain his position as the idol of the reactionary forces and to try and govern by the iron hand". On September 13, 1917, a week before Mrs. Besant was released from internment, Lord Chelmsford complained to Geoffrey Dawson, the Editor of the "Times", London, that an outburst by O'Dwyer rubbed salt into wounds which he (Chelmsford) had been striving to heal. Chelmsford said: "O'Dwyer undid my work in a minute". In spite of holding this opinion about O'Dwyer, Chelmsford gave him a free hand during the April, 1919 Punjab disturbances.

The hartal and demonstrations on April 6th, against the Rowlatt Act, alarmed the Punjab authorities who read into them the recrudescence of the 1857 Mutiny. Michael O'Dwyer boasted: "The British Government which has crushed foreign foes and quelled internal rebellion could afford to despise these agitations". On April 9th, the Ram Navami day, there were extraordinary scenes of fraternizations between Hindus and Muslims. A huge procession was formed which was peaceful and good-humoured. On April 10th, at Amritsar, following the arrest of two local leaders, a mob ran amuck, burnt down the town hall and the post office, cut telegraph wires and injured a few Europeans, including two British women. On April 11th, troops under the command of Brigadier-General Dyer were drafted into the City, which was quiet for the next two days.

On the afternoon of April 13th, which happened to be the festival of Baisakhi, a public meeting was held in Jallianwala

Bagh, despite a ban on meetings of which many people in the town were not aware. General Dyer marched his troops to the place where the meeting was being held, and ordered firing which lasted for ten minutes until the ammunition was exhausted. The Jallianwalla Bagh, with its high-walled enclosure and one narrow entrance, proved a virtual rat-trap for the hundreds of men, women and children who had assembled there.

This terrible event—the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh, naturally created an anti-British feeling throughout the length and breadth of India. O'Dwyer's Government declared Martial Law in Amritsar, Lahore and several districts of the Punjab. Ruthless action, O'Dwyer thought, would nip the 'rebellion' in the bud. Documentary evidence shows that the theory of conspiracy was thoroughly unfounded. M. L. Robertson, Bombay's Inspector General of Police wrote to C. R. Cleveland, Director of the Government of India's Intelligence Bureau, on 19th May: "It is difficult to understand the position in the Punjab fully. Have you been able to trace any organized conspiracy? We have not yet succeeded in doing so in Ahmedabad". Cleveland replied on the 23rd: "So far no traces of organized conspiracy have been found in the Punjab. There was organized agitation, and then in particular places the people went mad..... I am sorry to see that the *Times of India* and the *Pioneer* have committed themselves to the theory of Bolshevism or Egyptian instigation for our Indian Troubles. I have satisfied myself that they have no evidence worth the name to support the theory."

The Military meted out inhuman and humiliating punishments. Villagers were bombed from the air. They made it an offence for two Indians to walk abreast or for a Hindu and a Muslim to fraternize in public. In Lahore 1,000 college students were made to march sixteen miles in the scorching summer sun to salute the Union Jack. Summary Courts under Martial Law rounded up hundreds of persons and tried them. Six boys without the slightest proof, were flogged because they were suspected of assault on a British woman and a "Crawling Order" was imposed on people using the street in which the assault took place. This order meant that Indians who crossed the road could not walk through it but had to crawl on their stomachs from one end to the other.

Dyer, in his Hitler-like madness, believed that by thus strik-



ing terror he had averted a second Mutiny and saved the Raj! Sir Michael O'Dwyer approved of Dyer's shooting and other Martial Law atrocities.

Gandhiji had intended to resume Civil Disobedience Movement on 1st July. But he postponed it once again because he was warned by the Viceroy, through the Governor of Bombay, not to start his Civil Disobedience Movement again. To this warning was added a friendly advice from Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, Diwan Bahadur Govind Raghava Aiyar, newspaper editors and many friends from his own party.

He wrote to the Viceroy demanding repeal of the Rowlatt Act, an impartial Committee to enquire into the Punjab atrocities and a re-examination of the heavy sentences passed on the Punjab leaders. At this time, not enough was known about the enormities of the Punjab atrocities. These were revealed later in the evidence given before the Hunter Commission, and the non-official Congress Committee.

The news about the happenings in the Punjab travelled, in spite of heavy censorship, throughout the country and in October, Chelmsford had to yield to public opinion. He appointed a Commission of Enquiry under the Chairmanship of Lord Hunter, with four European and three Indian members, the most notable of them being Sir Chimanlal Setalvad.

Rabindranath Tagore renounced his Knighthood and wrote to the Viceroy: "The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation". C. F. Andrews called the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre a butchery, adding "English honour has departed".

During August, September and October, Gandhiji spent much of his time in Bombay. On October 1st, at my request, he presided at a public meeting to celebrate the 72nd birthday of Mrs. Besant and paid a glorious tribute to her work.

Gandhiji went to Lahore on 24th October, and met O'Dwyer's successor, Sir Edward Maclagan. Maclagan reported to the Government of India that Gandhiji appeared sincerely anxious to get matters settled. Gandhiji suggested that Rauf, one of the High Court Judges, appointed to review the Martial Law cases, should be replaced by a judge from another province; that Congress representatives should be permitted to suggest questions when witnesses were examined by the Hunter Com-

mittee; that some of the gaoled Punjab leaders like Har Kishen Lal, etc., who were conversant with the subject of the enquiry should be temporarily released. The Punjab Government (backed by the Government of India) was prepared to accommodate Gandhiji on the first two suggestions, but declined to release the Punjab leaders. Government, however, agreed to release each of the leaders on parole on the day his evidence was to be recorded. Gandhiji did not accept this compromise and decided to boycott the Hunter Commission. Congress decided to conduct a parallel enquiry. The Punjab Governor admitted: "The public effect of the (Hunter) Enquiry Committee would be weakened by the absence of the Congress."

The Congress Committee had as its members—Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Jayakar and Abbas Tyabji. Jayakar has recorded his reactions. "Gandhiji invariably assumed the role of the stern judge in sifting the chaff from the substance. He took infinite pains to see that what was to be put before the public was the quintessence of truth. The occasions were not infrequent when we differed violently as to what was the truth..... Das often advocated our view with great insistence; Motilal did the same but with great restraint. Gandhi often stood alone against all this fusillade". In the end, Jayakar adds, Gandhi's view prevailed!

Sir Chimanlal Setalvad met Gandhiji in Lahore at a friend's house and tried to impress upon him the desirability of the Congress Committee availing themselves of the opportunity offered by the Punjab Government for access to persons in jail and appearing before the Committee but Gandhiji was not agreeable to this. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad writes in his "Recollections": "The evidence of the official witnesses themselves, however, revealed the great excesses that had been perpetrated without any justification under the Martial Law Administration. Foremost among the excesses was the Jallianwalla Bagh at Amritsar by General Dyer."

General Dyer in his evidence before the Hunter Commission said: "I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed, and I consider this is the least amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral and widespread effect, it was my duty to produce if I was to justify my action.

"If more troops had been at hand the casualties would

have been greater in proportion. It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient effect on those who were present but more especially throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity."

In these words did General Dyer justify what was probably the blackest deed ever perpetrated by a British official in the days of the Raj, the shooting in the Jallianwalla Bagh, Amritsar, on April 13, 1919. The dead numbered 379. More than a thousand were injured. One thousand, six hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition were fired. The crowd which had collected for a meeting, was 25,000 strong. Among it were many children. It was unarmed and peaceful. The General admitted that its peaceful dispersal was possible. No warning, however, was given. The firing was low and continued for ten minutes even after the crowd had begun to disperse. He fired to strike terror, to teach a lesson. No more, no less.

Dyer was no "honest, blunt soldier". He gave many conflicting explanations. The Hunter Committee divided along racial lines. All the same, the majority (British Members) report criticised Dyer for opening fire without warning and for continuing the firing even after the crowd had begun to move. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad told me later that if Gandhiji and the Congress had not boycotted the Hunter Commission in Lahore and if the evidence collected by the Congress Committee had been tendered to the Hunter Commission, his minority report would have been the majority report as one of the British members would then have gone along with Sir Chimanlal and his Indian colleagues. Dyer was asked to resign. The Army Council in England to which he appealed upheld the order against Dyer. He was to be retired on half-pay with no prospects of future employment. In other words, he was disgraced. Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, characterized Dyer's action as "monstrous".

This decision was approved by the House of Commons. But the House of Lords by a 129-86 majority voted for Dyer. Rabindranath Tagore said: "The result of the Dyer debates in both Houses of Parliament makes painfully evident the attitude of mind of the ruling classes of the country towards India. It shows that no outrage, however monstrous, committed against

us by the agents of their Government can arouse feelings of indignation in the hearts of those from whom our governors are chosen. The unashamed condonation of brutality expressed in their speeches and echoed in their newspapers is ugly in its frightfulness".

Subsequently a fund was raised in England for presenting a purse to Dyer in appreciation of his services. This, along with the adverse vote in the House of Lords created great resentment in India, made much worse, as the British women in India, started a similar fund to be given to Dyer.

Mrs. Besant and I visited the Jallianwalla Bagh when we attended the Amritsar Congress in December, 1919. She remained in the Jallianwalla Bagh for half an hour without saying a word, tears flowing from her eyes.

## CHAPTER XI

### MRS. BESANT

FROM EARLY in 1919, Mrs. Besant's efforts were directed towards the organisation of a deputation of the Home Rule League to go to England to give evidence before the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament. Among those who were likely to be selected were Mrs. Besant, Jinnah, C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, B. P. Wadia and Telang. When she met Gandhiji on 29th January, she invited him to join the deputation as an independent member and asked him to give his reply before the 14th February. But though Mrs. Besant and Gandhiji met on the 14th February, as already stated in an earlier chapter, neither of them referred to this deputation. The internal political situation had changed during the fortnight because of Government's foolishness in introducing the Rowlatt Bills. Delegates were to be chosen from the different political organisations including the All India Home Rule League. But Gandhiji's followers in the Home Rule League were angry with Mrs. Besant because she dared oppose Gandhiji's intended civil disobedience movement against the Rowlatt Bills. A meeting of the Council of the All India Home Rule League met in Bombay late in February to select the office bearers and select the deputation. This was too much for Gandhiji and his followers. His followers, with Gandhiji's encouragement and connivance manoeuvred by following shady methods and intrigues, to force Mrs. Besant to resign her Presidentship of the Home Rule League. Jinnah was present at this meeting when Mrs. Besant was shabbily treated and thrown out by Gandhiji's followers. Even though Jinnah disagreed with them, he did not stand by Mrs. Besant and she had to fight her battle single-handed. He did not realise that his turn was to come next—eighteen months later—in October, 1920. Gandhiji's idea was to take away her political platform and thus prevent her from leading the Home

**Rule Deputation.** Gandhiji's philosophy of political life was: "Agree with me or there will be no room for you in politics" Gandhiji and his followers thought that they had silenced Mrs. Besant for all time. They did not know Mrs. Besant: She was irrepressible and she could never be crushed. Within a fortnight, travelling every night in the train, Mrs. Besant went to all the important political centres of India—Madras, Calcutta, Benares, Delhi, Simla and then Bombay. She started the National Home Rule League, appointed me—I was 27 then—its General Secretary and she worked faster than time. It was a unique experience for me to have had thus the privilege to work with her at close quarters.

I shall tell part of her story in her own words through her letters between 1918 and 1930 to me. I have eighty-four such letters, all hand-written in her beautiful hand-writing and about fifty telegrams. These letters speak for themselves but some of them would need an explanatory note. For every letter that she wrote to me, I wrote to her ten letters and more. I never kept copies of such letters because right up to the late twenties, it was considered not correct for a junior colleague or a follower to send type-written letters to his leader, and further 'Confidential' letters could not be typed by a secretary: The institution of 'private secretaries' to write confidential letters came a few years later.

As part of my discipline as her disciple, I wrote to her one letter every fortnight of about 1500 words, telling her of my thoughts, my emotions, my meditation and my political, social and labour work, and this work was outside the Theosophical Lodges. I was never an orthodox Lodge member. And besides these fortnightly letters I used to write to her every week two or three shorter letters. I saw the "acknowledgements" to these letters in the editorial, "On the Line" notes, and articles in my name in "New India" of which I was the Honorary Special Correspondent from Bombay. Mrs. Besant put in "New India" in journalistic language the news and opinions given in my letters and telegrams.

Going to England was not so easy in those days soon after the end of the First World War because facilities to go to Europe by sea—the only way to go to England then—were difficult to get and she had to get the passages through the

Government of India. She got them.

Branches of the National Home Rule League were started all over Bombay and Madras Presidencies as also in Benares (U.P.) and in Calcutta. Mrs. Besant wrote to me on 27th April:

"Enclosed show our proceedings here. We had a very good meeting. Things promise well, and there is good hope of a strong Merchants' Branch.

I wonder what the little knot of hostile folk are doing.

We have asked Patwardhan (Ahmednagar) to act as Provincial Secretary *pro tem*, but a Provincial Council should be formed as soon as possible".

A week later (3rd May) she wrote to me again: "My dear Son, Thanks for your two letters and enclosures. What a fine list of officers you have! I think we may leave the Vice-Presidents and Secretaries alone as to number at present. There are not often such cantankerous people about as we have had to deal with!

Do you know when there is to be a council of the All India League? I have heard nothing, but Mr. C. P. Ramaswami wrote to New India as you will have seen as "Vice-President and Secretary". They seem waking up now that they no longer have the amusement of tying us down, and they have apparently given up the idea that the Home Rule deputation would be a "rival to the Congress".

Four Karachi Satyagrahis gave up the pledge on the people there deciding on "dangerous methods". I do not know what the words mean, but they may explain the arrests. They are all Theosophists.

You will be receiving 500 copies of the enclosed pamphlet for giving away where you think useful. I think a copy should be given to every member, so that each may know exactly what has been done. There will be a leaflet of Rules, also to be given to everyone who seeks membership. The little book enclosed is an edition *de luxe* costing annas 2: The free edition is being printed. I wish I could get an answer as to date of sailing. I am arranging for the 17th but wish I could know for certain. I wired you yesterday to find out at Cook's.

All sorts of queer rumours run round here, but I wait for authentication or the reverse before troubling my head. If C.P. wanted the All-India pulled round. I wonder why he did not

help me to pull it round, instead of joining the Moderates and telling me to work on my own lines. It is very puzzling, and I am very anxious about his future politically; for nothing he can say or do can change my deep affection for him.

My love to your brother. Tell him I have been hoping to hear from him. I fear that I pour out on you all a great deal too much affection!

Ever yours affectionately,  
Annie Besant"

Mrs. Besant sailed for England on 17th May, from the Alexandra Docks. As I said good-bye to her with folded hands and bowed head, she shook hands with me and then laid her right hand on my back and blessed me with these words: "Kanji, I thank you for your work and help. A big opportunity is coming to you for more work"! I did not then understand how this blessing would work but the opportunity for more work and service which she had in mind came to me in January, 1921, when, most unexpectedly, the Governor of Bombay, on the advice of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, nominated me to the First Montague Legislative Council as a member for Labour.

Mrs. Besant reached London by the end of May, 1919. When she started her Home Rule League in India in 1916, she realised that it was not enough for the agitation for Home Rule to be confined to India. She wanted to make a direct approach to the British people. She had powerful and influential friends in England and they were willing to work with her and help her in the cause which she had now taken up viz., freedom for India. And so, an Auxilliary of the Besant Home Rule League was started in London on June 7th, 1916. The first members of the Committee were:

George Lansbury (Chairman)

Countess de La Warr (Secretary) (Lady Willingdon's Sister and Daughter of Earl Brassy)

Lady Emily Lutyens

Miss Esther Bright (Niece of John Bright)

Mrs. Despard

Phillip Snowden (afterwards Chancellor of the Exchequer in Ramsay MacDonald's Govt.)

Mrs. Snowden



C. Jinarajadas

Major David Graham Pole

Bernard Shaw joined a little later.

George Lansbury was a Theosophist and a friend of Krishnamurti. He had worked with Mrs. Besant during the 1880's and early 1890's. He praised her work for Labour and her successful efforts at unionisation. He was equally interested in India.

George Lansbury writing to Graham Pole on Nov. 24, 1917, said: "Tell Mrs. Besant she will find a good Home Rule Movement to welcome her when next she comes home and please give her my love".

George Lasbury continued his work for India right till the end of his life. He introduced in 1927 in the House of Commons a Private Bill, "The Commonwealth of India Bill", which was prepared by Mrs. Besant, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar; and drafted by Rt. Hon. Arthur Henderson, later Under Secretary of State for India in the Attlee Government. I met Arthur Henderson in London in December, 1946, and again in July, 1948, when he was Secretary of State for Air.

Major Graham Pole was a Theosophist and Legal Adviser to Mrs. Besant. He was Under Secretary of State for War in the Ramsay MacDonald Government in 1930. For thirty-six years, he worked hard for India and my correspondence with him was spread over 30 years right till his passing away in November, 1952. From the material I sent him week by week, he drafted questions for the M.P.s and during one year in the middle Twenties, as many as 884 questions were asked on India on every possible subject through the efforts of David Graham Pole. The Speaker of the House of Commons commented that these questions were typed from the same type-writer and on the same kind of note-paper! Graham Pole came to be known as a Member for India and he helped the British Labour Party to keep itself well-informed on different aspects of Indian problems. Through him, I met Prime Minister Attlee at 10 Downing Street on 17th December, 1946, soon after the failure of Attlee, Wavell, Nehru, Jinnah Conference, and again on 8th June, 1951 and ever since then has been maintained a steady and continuous correspondence with Earl Attlee.

The London Home Rule League carried on the spade work and its prominent members, among others, George Lansbury, Jinaraj-

das, Lady Emily Lutyens, Graham Pole, held meetings. They also interviewed newspaper editors. Lansbury met Montague, Secretary of State for India, and suggested release from internment of Mrs. Besant. The London League also arranged public meetings for Joseph Baptista, the right-hand man of Tilak, who was sent to England to work for Mrs. Besant's release. The League also published Lala Lajpat Rai's "Young India" which was banned in India. In November 1917, the League made efforts to put on the agenda of the British Labour Party Conference a motion in favour of Home Rule for India.

In June, 1918, a letter was received by the League from C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, the Congress Secretary: "I have great pleasure in informing you that at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee held at Bombay on the 3rd May, 1918, it was resolved that the Secretaries be directed to cable to you asking you to invite the Labour Party at its Conference in June next to send a fraternal delegate to the next Indian National Congress at Delhi in December, 1918".

The League wanted to wait in deputation on President Wilson during his visit to London. The President by his letter dated 11th January, 1919, regretted his inability to receive the deputation from the League owing to the great demands upon his limited time much as he would like to have done so.

At the Annual Conference of the British Labour Party which met at Nottingham in 1918, the following resolution was passed unanimously:

"That this Labour Conference endorses the policy of Home Rule for India believing that the time has arrived when our brothers in all parts of India are capable of controlling their own affairs, equally along with South Africa, Australia and other British Dominions, and hereby pledges itself to assist in every way possible to bring about this much desired reform; further we desire that all Labour Members in the British House of Commons shall do all in their power to bring pressure upon the present Government, without undue delay, in order that these people shall be given their just rights, which have been due to them throughout all time, including the right of self-Government".

Immediately on arrival in England, Mrs. Besant set to work.

B. P. Wadia interviewed Arthur Henderson and Mrs. Besant

was invited to address the Labour Party Conference to speak on India.

With a view to expanding the scope of the London Home Rule League, meetings were held with representatives of several organisations, and as a result, an Indian Parliamentary Committee was formed. Among the members of Parliament, who joined this Committee were Neil Maclean, S. Arnold, Commander Kenworthy, Ben Spoor, W. Lunn, J. C. Swan, Col. Wedgwood and Ben Tillet. Bernard Shaw, C. Roden Buxton, Philip Snowden, George Lansbury, Annie Besant, B. P. Wadia, P. K. Telang, D. Graham Pole, Dr. Hayden Guest, Lady Emily Lutyens, Dr. Rutherford, Countess De La Warr, Mrs. Snowden, Mrs. J. Ransom, Miss Barbara Villiers and John Scurr were the other members of the Committee. Corresponding members were appointed for Aberdeen, Glasgow, Leven, Edinburgh; also Burnley, New Castle-on-tyne, Leeds, Nottingham, Bath and Liverpool.

Mrs. Besant notes: "On both Tuesday and Wednesday there were many visitors, among them V. S. Srinivas Sastri, Snowden, Nevinson, Brailsford, Bullitt and George Lansbury and we had much interesting conversation . . . Lansbury was, as ever, the good genius of the gathering, and we contributed accounts of Indian conditions, and answered questions. Our hostess Lady De La Warr, to whom the flats belong, is daily with us, and we go back to Wimbledon together, where I stay with Miss Esther Bright." She gave four lectures at Queens Hall on successive Sundays. Sastri wrote from London to his friend, A. V. Patwardhan, on 26th June, 1919: "The exciting events which are embarrassing the Peace Conference and the general industrial and economic unrest of which there take place many striking manifestations even in England, have driven the Indian question away from that foothold on public attention which the debate on the second reading of the Government of India Bill seemed for a time to have secured for it. The India Office, the Indian Deputations, and the guardians of vested interests seem the only people whose minds are busy with the affairs of India. A few thoughtful publicists in each party are of course, keenly interested in the events that influence the condition of India. The Daily Herald, the popular organ of Labour, has been publishing a series of short and telling articles from the pen of Mrs.

**Besant.** Mr. Banerjee was interviewed by the Observer on the other day: the Oxford Outlook contains an article by a young Madras scholar of promise, Mr. P. P. Subramanya Sastri, on the Indian Reforms. In the same magazine, Prof. Gilbert Murray, one of the world's most renowned scholars, and a genuine friend of India, makes a reference to her case which indicates his earnest liberalism in politics. "In the Problems of the Empire", he asks, "do we believe that the disaffection of Ireland and the unrest of India are ultimately to be settled by the removal of grievances and extension of self-government, or do we contentedly accept the motto that "what we took by the sword we must hold by the sword?"

Two meetings of importance were held during the week in the National Liberal Club of interest to the people of India. The first was a big tea organised by the London Indian Association, to which most Indians and the members of a progressive society called "Great Britain and India" were asked. No political speeches were expected. In fact, the President, a young doctor named Atal, began by saying so, but he could not restrain his feeling when he alluded to the stern measures of the Punjab Government. He then called on Mr. Tilak, who alluded to the same topic and then expressed a hope that the various Indian deputations might act together, adding that in that case he would undertake to cable to the All India Congress Committee and obtain a relaxation of the 'mandate' by which the Congress had bound its delegates.

Mrs. Besant made the speech of the evening. She was occasionally interrupted, but skilfully got a hold over the audience, and while not abating a jot of India's ultimate demand or discounting her fitness for Home Rule, counselled caution to the young and energy to the old, urged the need of recognising solid facts and drove home the expediency of supporting Montague's Bill while endeavouring to liberalise it. The speech indicated her extraordinary mastery over the feelings of hearers and her power to triumph even over a hostile atmosphere."

A meeting of members of the House of Commons was held on 30th July with F. O. Roberts, M.P. in the Chair. It was well attended and was addressed by Srinivas Sastri, C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Jinnah and Mrs. Besant. Mrs. Besant and other members of the National Home Rule League Deputation toured all over

England and Scotland and addressed meetings at Bradford, Harrogate, York, Newcastle, Glasgow, Burnley, Manchester, Hanley, Bristol, Bath, Letchworth, Battersea, Liverpool, Blackburn, Woolwich, Birmingham, Tunbridge Wells, North London, Birkenhead, Wigans and Rochdale.

The London Home Rule League and the Indian Parliamentary Committee did excellent work in 1919 when the Joint Select Committee of Parliament was sitting to take evidence on the Montague Bill.

Mrs. Besant submitted to the Joint Select Committee of the Parliament a memorandum on behalf of the National Home Rule League. Answering written questions she stated that she accepted Diarchy in the Provinces to start with but added that there should be full Provincial Autonomy in five years. She further demanded responsibility in the Central Government by way of Diarchy and she definitely stated that within a period of 15 years there should be full responsible government in India.

As regards women's suffrage, she said: "We urge that the objections to it are weak and artificial and that it introduces a sex disability into Indian life that is alien to its whole spirit; for in the elected Councils which have marked Indian civilisation from the dawn of history, women were not barred and the idea of sex as a barrier only came with Western systems, and even there did not succeed in barring University degrees to women."

As regards communal electorates, Mrs. Besant said: "We do not approve of communal representation, as it intensifies separation by importing religious questions into politics, where few, if any, political interests divide the persons."

Mrs. Besant gave oral evidence before the Joint Select Committee.

In spite of her heavy work in England, she found time to write to me.

On July 31, 1919, she wrote to me:

"Thanks for your letter. I am sending very full news to "New India" and Jamnadas is writing to the "Bombay Chronicle". So you can keep track of our doings. Interest in India

is growing immensely, and I think we may better the reform Bill. We are sending a lot of literature as well as having so many meetings.

Wadia, Pandharinath and Jamnadas are all speaking well, and are immensely liked, both as speakers and men. Everyone admires them: I am so pleased.

I would like to hear of our National Home Rule League making branches in Bombay. Please try and form some.

With love and blessing,

Annie Besant".

Mrs. Besant started a weekly "United India" in London. She wrote to me on 25th Sept. 1919:

"I am sending you by next mail 300 copies of the first issue of 'United India'. I want you to sell or get subscribers for as many as possible, sending the money to me *here*, as subscribers will get their copies direct. Some might be put on sale at the bookshop. Please distribute copies to Congress Committees, Clubs, Reading Rooms, etc. in Bombay and Sindh.

"You will get a similar number each week for 6 *weeks*. After that they will only be sent to subscribers. Do not send to press, as we are sending from here. You might send copies to leading men, Wacha, Chandavarkar, Natarajan, Setalvad, and any one you select for the 6 issues.

Ever yours,  
Annie Besant."

On October 23, 1919, she wrote to me:

"I am grateful to you for your work. When you can, would you send me word how many branches of N.H.R.L. you have in Bombay and the names of their Presidents and Secretaries?

*United India*. We are sending 300 copies a week up to issue of Nov. 5th. After that, I shall be sending you 50 a week for the book shops. Let me know by cable if this will do. I pay for them here, so you can pay me when I return home. I hope there will be some subscriptions from Bombay. We are getting from Madras. Could you get any one to send articles, and could you not send Bombay cuttings and news every week, addressed Editor of United India, 1, Robert Street, Adelphi, London W.C. 2? Please do this at once, so that I can show my

assistant what to do with it. It is so good of friends to send me a birthday gift. If it has not been posted before you get this, would you put it in your Bank and give it to me when I reach Bombay? I have paid all our travelling and propaganda expenses out of the Bombay gift when I left, and have been able to help Wadia to America. He has done splendid work.

Love to Ratansi and my good comrades and friends in Bombay. I learn from Mr. Hasan Imam that he was tricked into accepting the presidency of the All-India Home Rule League by the group of Satyagraha slanderers in Bombay. I felt sure that he would not have accepted it had he known how I was intrigued out of my re-election.

Yours affectionately,  
Annie Besant."

P. K. Telang wrote to me regularly most informative, interesting weekly letters, telling me all about Mrs. Besant's work and the evidence given by various organisations and individuals before the Joint Select Committee. It is not possible to quote from all the thirty letters he wrote to me during the five months he was in England as a member of the National Home Rule League Deputation. These letters would adorn the archives of the historical records of India. All that I can do is to quote from a few of them.

On 3rd July, 1919, he wrote to me:

"At the Annual Conference of the Labour Party at Southport, we had seats on the platform and were treated as fraternal delegates. Mrs. Besant spoke on behalf of India and had a tremendous greeting. She made one of the most exquisite speeches I have heard, speaking only for about seven minutes (10 minutes were allowed to each delegate) and bringing in almost every point that needed touching in the most telling manner. There was deafening applause as she sat down and we could hear references to her as "good old Annie", "fine old woman" and so on. What respect she excites among the Socialists and Labourites. Many like Sidney Webb, Phillip Snowden, George Lansbury were happy to find that though not in their ranks directly she was doing the same kind of work as theirs in India. While at Southport, we heard a magnificent lecture on the situation in Russia from Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, really wonderful ad-

dress. He has become very much converted to our point of view regarding things Indian, though I do not know how far exactly."

On 31st July, 1920, he wrote:

"On July 20, we had the big Labour Party demonstrations against the war in Russia, conscription, and the detention of conscientious objectors in prison. A. B. spoke at the meeting at Trafalgar Square. She pleaded for the withdrawal of foreign armies from Russia so that the Revolution there may be given a free chance of settling the affairs of Russia as fast as possible. She pointed out how the interference of European Powers with France led to the delaying of the results of the Revolution there in their manifestation. As regards the excesses in Russia at the present day, she pointed out that these depended upon the kind of rule that has preceded and that is being overthrown. She instanced the liberation of the United States as having been accomplished without excesses because there was no tyranny like that of Bourbons or the Czars to overthrow. She was received most enthusiastically as an old friend. I wish people, who call her all sorts of names in India, would come and see how the most advanced section of politicians and social workers here welcome her and what they say of her and how they treat her."

In his letter of 7th August, 1919, Telang gave a vivid picture of the members of the Joint Select Committee: "It seems to me that Montague, Sinha and Rees are the three people who know enough about the subjects that they are dealing with. The rest have glimpses here and there and of course have pet themes of their own. Lord Selbourne, the President, seems to be overburdened with the consciousness of the difference between the East and the West and would like to keep India on eastern lines, but he asks good questions and makes a good President. Montague is very keen, very able and very desirous of getting on. He is of course for the Bill, the whole Bill and nothing but the Bill. Crewe asks good questions now and then and seems on the whole of the same mind as Montague. Middleton is not very brilliant and generally wants agitation about reforms to end; his pet question is, will people begin after the Act to think of the work to be done under the Bill or still keep on thinking of the machinery of administration and government



and agitating for changes and advances. He seems to desire that for the next century or so we need not think of anything else. Sir Henry Craik is rather old and rambling and not very helpful though he has the reputation of an extremely able man. Both are with Montague, I think. Ben Spoor is a Labour man, very well inclined to us but has no knowledge at all. Next comes Sydenham. Nobody sympathises with him and Montague, Sinha and Rees go out of their way to show the hollowness of his case. Next comes Capt. Ormsby-Gore, a fine, delightful, cheerful young man. He does not know much but I think has got himself well trained by Sastri and others. He is with Montague. Bennett of the Times of India takes up the attitude of the Moderates. He apparently belongs to the Class of Sir Stanley Reed, and as regards the Bill, is, I think, with Montague. Rees is very keen, energetic and full of knowledge. He asks most searching questions, has made up his mind to get the Bill through and does extremely well in breaking the case of people who make too much of communal, religious and caste differences. Lord Islington has asked excellent questions from the administrative standpoint and seems on the whole to favour unitary systems. Lastly comes Lord Sinha, one Indian on the Committee and fully worthily does he hold up the cause of India. Wonderfully well informed and possessing a complete grasp of the whole problem and the surrounding circumstances. Keen as a razor to find out the exact point, extremely clever in unravelling hidden or not well-expressed meanings, always on the watch to pin down statements unfavourable to India and ready to help Indians when too much questioning has put them into awkward positions—he is surely the most brilliant, the most helpful and the most earnest of the members of the Committee. He is however, bound to stand with Montague.”

Referring to the witnesses so far examined, Telang writes: “The official witnesses did well, but the case of the Government of India and the Local Governments has been thoroughly broken down mainly by Montague and Sinha. Meston, Hill, Sly and Southborough have up till now come up, the last three side with Montague, the first represented the Government of India. Of non-official witnesses, we have had Surendra Nath, A. B., C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, Vithalbhaj Patel, Madhavrao, Tilak, Sarojini Naidu. The first three did extremely well. A. B.

managed to put in as much of our case as possible by taking a large latitude in answering questions. She was very helpful. C.P. was very good. He smashed up Sydenham in excellent style. Tilak was very calm, sober and reasonable. He put his case with his usual skill and collectedness. He was however, not cross-examined at all and was, it seemed to many of us, rather badly treated, even by Lord Selbourne who is generally so courteous. His statement taking up the Delhi Congress attitude was precise and finely put. Sarojini Naidu spoke on woman suffrage and made a good speech though a little rhetorical and theatrical at times which was of course, out of place before the Committee. Vithalbhai Patel took up an aggressive attitude from the beginning and put up the backs of the Committee who then went on simply attacking him and showing that he knew nothing. He lost his balance completely and even in stating his case was incoherent, illogical, indefinite and unsure."

After referring to certain witnesses from amongst the I.C.S., the Moderates, the non-Brahmins, etc., Telang goes on to say: "Jinnah began in an aggressive tone but later on settled down to quite a good statement. Montague cross-examined him and wanted, it seemed, to discredit him by showing his lack of knowledge and unreasonableness of attitude. But he did not go very far that way. Jinnah did very well indeed when general principles were concerned and proved himself the equal of everybody where question and answer and repartee were concerned. But when it came to actual practical details he showed himself very weak without any mastery or study and Sinha came as usual to the rescue by putting him general questions and getting out all that he wanted to say shorn of all controversial frippery. Jinnah's attitude was not self-collected but on the whole I think his evidence was good.

After Jinnah, came Sastri and Ramchandra Rao and they gave, especially Sastri, the best evidence of the whole group with the probable exception of A.B. The mastery of detail, the profundity of knowledge, the breadth of outlook and the wealth of information they displayed was marvellous. Sastri went into the Bill clause by clause and thus dealt with the draft Instrument of Instructions to Governors prepared by the Government of India and lastly spoke on the Brahman-non-Brahman question in Madras. You should have been there to see Sastri. Ram-

chandra Rao put in splendid notes on the rule-making power under the Bill, on the budget procedure and on the non-Brahman question. The industry and information of the man are phenomenal. Sastri in his dignity, restraint, courtesy and knowledge struck everyone as one of the greatest brains in the Empire. I have been saying that to various people and they came and told me that they quite saw what I meant. Selbourne put exactly the same questions to him that he put to A.B. It seems to me that the evidence of the two put the whole Indian case completely and unanswerably."

On 21st Aug. 1919, Telang wrote: "There has been some very excellent evidence given by Sir Michael Sadler and Sir Stanley Reed. They took up, both of them, the position that the Indians have taken. Sir Stanley's evidence was simply an eye-opener to me. How we have misjudged him. Sir Archdale Earle also gave very very good evidence all on our side." Telang adds: "Gandhi's position seems to be absolutely reckless and the behaviour of his followers especially to A.B. absolutely criminal."

On the 27th August, Telang wrote: "A.B. trusts you. She knows your heart is in right direction and your judgment is by no means liable to go wrong; and you must take the responsibility to lead. Two things she wants you to concentrate on (1) the opening of new branches of the National Home Rule League all over, and (2) the attempt to gather together for organisation in the near future into a consolidated Progressive Party of all progressive elements in all sections."

Mrs. Besant returned to Bombay on the 19th December, 1919. She stayed on in England till the Montague Bill was finally passed, and she brought with her a copy of the Act. As I met her at the Ballard Pier Mole Station, she handed over to me six closely hand-written articles. She had written them on the boat. She asked me to get printed as early as possible 20,000 copies of each of these articles as pamphlets in three languages—English, Gujarati and Marathi. I had to get these six articles translated into the two regional languages of Bombay and within five days, I handed to her the printed copies. These were for free distribution in the city. The pamphlets touched upon different aspects of the Montague Act, clarifying what India had gained by the Act.

One of the first subjects she discussed with me was the failure of the Peace Treaty at Versailles which President Wilson attended. Great hopes were raised by his famous fourteen points. But he was outwitted and out-manoeuvred by Clemenceau of France, Orlando of Italy and Lloyd George of the United Kingdom. Mrs. Besant told me that William Bullit, a young idealist in President Wilson's entourage had called on her early in June in London. He told her that he was dissatisfied with President Wilson's weakness in handling the three European statesmen. Wilson could not stand up against them and gave way all along the line. Bullit, therefore, in disgust resigned his job with the President and was returning to the United States via London. Having heard that Mrs. Besant had just arrived in London, he called on her. William Bullit's last big job was ambassadorship of Soviet Russia during the Second World War years when Franklin Roosevelt was the President. Before the war ended, he went to Washington and warned the President against too much reliance and faith in Communist Russia after the war was over. Bullit lunched with me in May, 1951, a fortnight before I flew to London and New York on my second visit to the U.S.A. I asked him if he remembered he had called on Mrs. Besant in London in 1919. He was surprised that I should know about this and he said that he particularly remembered this meeting with her, because when he met Mrs. Besant, he was introduced to Krishnamurti and his brother Nityanand.

Mrs. Besant told me that the London Home Rule League had done splendid work for Indian Home Rule for three years and was helpful to her and her work during the six months that she was in England. The League was finally dissolved in October, 1920, and the letter dated 27th October to Mrs. Besant sent by George Lansbury is well worth quoting as it summarises its great work and achievement during the four years of its existence:

"Dear Mrs. Besant,

We have unanimously come to the conclusion that for the present our work is finished.

From the first days of our formation, our endeavours were all directed to arouse a demand for Indian Home Rule amongst the organised (Trade Unionist) workers of this country and to getting that demand incorporated in the programme of their

political organisation, the Labour Party, and by constant work during the last few years we have, as you know, stirred up a very real interest in the ranks of the Labour movement and Indian Home Rule was definitely adopted into the Programme of the Party at its conference at Nottingham in 1918.

"Having thus obtained our immediate objective, and the Reform Bill having been passed as a first step on the road to complete Home Rule, we feel that it will be best in future to work through the Labour Party, especially as our Chairman, Mr. George Lansbury, is on its Executive Committee.

"You may rely on us all as being anxious at all times to do everything in our power to forward the interests of the Indian Home Rule Movement."

It was left to Prime Minister Attlee to fulfil the promise of the British Labour Party to give in 1947, responsible self-government to India.

Mrs. Besant continued her great work for India right through the Twenties, though by opposing Gandhiji's Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience Movements, she lost her popularity with the people of India. She did not worry about losing her popularity. She did what she thought was right.

She had said many years ago: "If friendship fail me, they must fail; if human love leave me, it must go; so that I be true to that truth I follow, and strive to do her service in the world in which I live. She may lead me into the desert, I will go after her; she may strip me of all love, I will still cling to her, and I ask no loftier epitaph on my tomb-stone than this:

"She Tried To Follow Truth".

## CHAPTER XII

### DECEMBER 1919 — AMRITSAR CONGRESS KING'S CLEMENCY

MRS. BESANT and I went to Benares to attend the Theosophical Convention. From there, Mrs. Besant, Telang, Ruttonsi and myself left for Amritsar. It was always a happy and unique privilege to travel with Mrs. Besant. She became, as she always was to me, a mother, a hostess and a teacher.

As we reached Lucknow on the morning of 25th December, the station was agog with great excitement and joy. Lokmanya Tilak, Khaparde, Baptista, Kelkar and the Maharashtrian delegates who were travelling by a special train to the Congress, joined us at the Lucknow junction. On 24th December, King George V issued a Proclamation granting his assent to the Indian Reforms Act and an amnesty to the political prisoners. The Proclamation *inter alia* stated: "So far as possible, any trace of bitterness between my people and those who are responsible for My Government should be obliterated". These admirable sentiments coming straight from the King-Emperor created a most favourable atmosphere in Amritsar. It looked as if the British Democracy would triumph over the British Bureaucracy in India, that British justice would triumph over British prestige. Motilal Nehru, as President of the Congress, expressed his 'humble appreciation' of the Proclamation. Tilak cabled from Lucknow Station his 'grateful and loyal' thanks to the King Emperor and offered responsive co-operation. This cable was drafted by Joseph Baptista and the phrase 'responsive co-operation' he said, implied that in response to the King's gracious message, Tilak in his turn was offering his co-operation. Tilak, however, was taken to task at a private meeting of the leaders which was held on the eve of the Congress Session—I was present there with Mrs. Besant—for his cable to the King in which he had offered responsive co-operation. Tilak, find-

ing himself in a fix, said that he did not offer co-operation to the British and the phrase 'responsive co-operation' meant that if only the British would give co-operation, he would offer co-operation to them in return!

Gandhiji said: "The Proclamation is a document of which the British people have every reason to be proud and with which every Indian ought to be satisfied. The Proclamation has replaced distrust with trust but it remains to be seen whether it would filter down to the civil service".

It was apparent that with the dawn of the New Year, the trail of bloodshed and bitterness left by 1919 might after all be obliterated.

Motilal Nehru had a severe attack of asthma and he was under the shadow of a great domestic tragedy.

Tilak, before returning to India, promised Montague that he was anxious to work the Montague Act, his point of view being that the Act gave more than four annas in the rupee (25%) of the Indian demands, and by working the Act and thus pocketing the four annas, India could and would secure the remaining twelve annas.

The Christmas week in Amritsar was bitterly cold and Gandhiji was fiddling about with a pair of woollen stockings, twisting them in his hands, and he could not make up his mind to wear them. I told him, "Look here, it is so very cold. You better wear the woollen stockings or you will catch cold". My telling him to wear had the contrary effect, for he immediately gave away the stockings to someone who was standing near him.

The King's Proclamation of clemency was well-timed as it emptied the jails of political prisoners and among those who were released and were present on the platform were the Ali Brothers, Dr. Kitchlew, Lala Harkishan Lal and Pandit Ram-bhuj Dutt Chowdhary.

C. R. Das moved a resolution which declared that the Reforms were inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing. The Resolution called on the British Parliament to take early steps to establish full responsible government in India in accordance with the principle of self-determination. The resolution was accepted by the Subjects Committee by a majority. Gandhiji protested against the Subjects Committee's reluctance to condemn the excesses of the mobs during the Punjab disturbances. He said:

"I agree that grave provocation was given by the Government, but our people went mad too. I say, do not return madness with madness, but return madness with sanity, and the whole situation will be yours".

Gandhiji moved an amendment at the open session of the Congress to Das's resolution that "the people should co-operate to work the Reforms in order to secure an early establishment of full responsible government".

Das regarded Gandhiji's amendment as a climb down. But Gandhiji's amendment was supported by Malaviya and Jinnah. The atmosphere was tense but at last a compromise was accepted by the Congress. The words "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing" were retained but a clause was added that "Pending establishment of full responsible government, the Congress trusts that so far as may be possible the people will so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full responsible government; and this Congress offers its thanks to the Rt. Hon'ble E. S. Montague for his labours in connection with the Reforms".

Gandhiji said: "I felt that the Reforms, though defective, could still be accepted. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, on the other hand, adhered firmly to the view that the Reforms ought to be rejected as wholly inadequate and unsatisfactory".

The Amritsar Congress 1919, afforded a clear illustration of the attitude of that extreme section of the Nationalist party, which was in control of the Congress organisation. Despite the appeal for co-operation between all classes of his subjects which was the burden of the gracious proclamation signifying His Majesty's assent to the Reform Act, the speeches delivered at Amritsar displayed an unprecedented bitterness. Many persons who had benefited by the Royal amnesty showed themselves prominent in denouncing the motives and policy of the administration. A motion for the recall of Lord Chelmsford was carried. Mrs. Besant was of opinion that the Montague Act was an improvement on the Montague Bill, which in itself was a great improvement on the Montford Proposals. Mrs. Besant, therefore, wanted the Congress to make a more positive approach to the new Reforms Act and pleaded unsuccessfully with Gandhiji to accept her point of view.

Sriniwas Sastri in his lectures on Sir Pherozshah Mehta in



1945, called the years 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1918 "the heyday of Indian politics". He continued: "These four years from the end of 1915 to the middle of 1918 marked the high water mark as it were of Indian politics. Hindus and Muhammadans joined forces together and these years marked the attainment of full understanding between the Extremists and the Moderates in the Congress—the holding of the Congress and the Muslim League in the same place and the two bodies sometimes meeting together and allowing their managements to mix together. These four years mark the time when it was the Common Chapter of Indian politics". I asked Sastri if he had anybody particularly in mind when he said this and he replied: "Mrs. Besant". Sastri goes on to say: "Then we fell away again." (Gandhiji took over the Congress after 1919).

From Amritsar I returned to Bombay with Mrs. Besant, Telang and Ruttonsi. She was not too happy with the Congress Resolution even though it had decided to work the new Reforms. At the Delhi Station, Mohamed Ali and Shoukat Ali spent over half an hour with Mrs. Besant in our compartment and indulged in a most fantastic and wild talk. They said to Mrs. Besant that they were most grateful to her for her great work for India and for agitating strongly for the release of Ali Brothers and other detenues. They promised her full co-operation but added that there was great trouble and danger ahead. They referred to the possibility of an adverse anti-Turkish treaty and they hinted that there would be bloodshed in India if the British Government did not satisfy the Indian Muslims' religious feelings in regard to the Caliphate. Jamshed Mehta who had brought the Ali Brothers to our compartment said to me as the Ali Brothers left: "Kanji, be prepared for a violent upheaval in the political field in this coming year. I don't like the way the Ali Brothers are trying to take to Indian politics to because they want to mix it up with Muslims' religious feelings and violence".

What little optimism was created by the Amritsar Resolution for working the Reforms soon evaporated. Two events which occurred in the following months struck a fatal blow to popular co-operation in the introduction of the Reforms. Firstly, the signature of the Treaty of Sevres was taken in India as final proof that Muslim interests were to be sacrificed on the altar of

the pro-Greek policy of the British Government. Secondly, the refusal of the British House of Lords to endorse the censure of General Dyer contained in the Hunter Commission's Report, and in the Government of India's Dispatch thereon, appeared to most people in India as proof that, notwithstanding the 1917 Declaration, the old spirit still animated the British attitude towards India. This led to increased racial animosity. Gandhiji jumped into the fray. He took as a Hindu, the unprecedented step of identifying himself with a Muslim religious movement.

In January, 1920, an influential delegation of Indian Muhamedans set out in elaborate detail to Lord Chelmsford the views of this Community upon the necessity for the preservation of the Turkish Empire and of the sovereignty of the Sultan as Khalif. Lord Chelmsford replied sympathetically pointing out that precautions had been taken by His Government and by the Secretary of State for India, Montague, to place the sentiments of Indian Muslims before the Peace Conference. He stated that the case for the favourable treatment of Turkey had been pressed with an earnestness of purpose and a force of argument which could not be surpassed; and that ever since the Armistic he had been in private communication with the Secretary of State urging upon His Majesty's Government the view that Muslims' feelings in India had to be taken into most serious account before coming to a final decision.

It will, therefore, be seen that on this question of treaty with Turkey, the Government of India were in agreement with the views of political India including the Muslims.

What was the origin of this Khilafat Movement? In its inception it appears to have originated among a certain section of advanced Muhamedan opinion whose views can broadly be described as Pan-Islamic and pro-Turkish which meant extra-territorial loyalty of Indian Muslims beyond the frontiers of India.

The reaction of the Punjab atrocities and the Khilafat Movement were not the only headaches of the Government of India. The advancing tide of Bolshevism in Russia caused heart-searching to all who were sufficiently far-sighted to cast their gaze beyond the immediate questions of these and other domestic politics. Afghanistan and Persia, India's neighbours then, were causing severe headaches, particularly it was feared, Rus-

sia could penetrate into India via Afghanistan and through the unfriendly Frontier Tribes, beyond Peshawar.

The resentment against South Africa took an unfavourable turn. The new legislation passed in June, 1919, by the Union Government of South Africa was a departure from the spirit of the 1914 Gandhi-Smuts agreement.

Equally disconcerting was the course of events in East Africa. The European residents urged a policy of restricting Indian immigration. A violent anti-Indian agitation took place despite the fact that the resident Indian population had been long established and possessed substantial interests. Worse trouble was in store for Indians in Kenya because of the suggested racial segregation in residential and commercial areas. Whilst the Government of India sympathised with the Indian point of view, there is no doubt the British Government threw their weight in favour of the white population in South Africa, East Africa and Kenya. This resulted in more bitterness in India. Disturbed though Mrs. Besant was by all these domestic and international troubles, she continued her efforts at popularising the Reforms. For this purpose, she toured all over India, time and again.

She wrote to me from Calcutta on January 23, 1920:

" . . . . I had a big crowd last night on 'What India gains by the Reform Act'. They were very interested and very enthusiastic at the end. Now I go on to Benares, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Agra and Allahabad".

Mrs. Besant rightly felt that only a strong and independent India could resist insults and humiliations from unjustified and criminal ideas of the white racial superior attitude against India and the coloured races.

In February 1920, Jinnah asked me to rejoin his All India Home Rule League of which he was the President of the Bombay Branch. I had resigned from the Home Rule League along with Mrs. Besant in February, 1919, and I was working with Mrs. Besant as the Hon. General Secretary of the National Home Rule League. I, therefore, told Jinnah that it was not for me to make a decision on the subject; he had to approach Mrs. Besant to come to an understanding with her on the joint working of the All-India and the National Home Rule Leagues, on the same lines as the working together of the All India Home

Rule League and Tilak's Home Rule League. Jinnah and I, so also Umar Sobani were anxious that we should once again get together and that eventually the two Home Rule Leagues would work again as one. So, Jinnah, Umar and I approached Mrs. Besant with our suggestion. She came down to Bombay and she and Jinnah had two and half hours' discussion on the subject of my re-joining the All India Home Rule League. She wrote to me on 11th March, 1920, from Madras:

"I wired you to join. It will appeal to the public. We will work none the less energetically to strengthen and spread our Home Rule League. Please give Umar Sobani enclosed.

I like Programme 2 best. But if we go to Rajkot we should go straight through from Bombay, reaching on Saturday evening and giving them Sunday, and working southwards from Ahmedabad. Otherwise, we cannot take Rajkot in and they will be much disappointed".

In this letter to Umar, she said: "Thanks for your note. I wired to Kanji asking him to join the Council of the All India Home Rule League. I believe that is most useful and it will not injure the National Home Rule League as we shall continue to strengthen that. I hate quarrels and always want to forget them. They waste time and strength."

In spite of Jayakar's opposition, Jinnah asked Gandhiji to become the President of the All India Home Rule League. Jinnah was trying to get a united front for the proper working of the new Reforms and he thought he would be able to keep some check on Gandhiji if Gandhiji would agree to work with him in the Home Rule League!

Gandhiji wrote to Srinivas Sastri on 18th March, 1920. The letter is important even today and is worth quoting in full:

"As I took an active part in the Congress affairs last year I have been asked to interest myself still more actively to the extent of joining an organisation. The demand has come from those with whom I have had the privilege of working although I was not connected with their organisation. They have asked me to join the All India Home Rule League. I have told them that at my time of life and with views firmly formed on several matters I could only join an organisation to affect its policy and not be affected by it. This does not mean that I would not keep or that I do not have an open mind to receive new light.

I simply wish to emphasize the fact that any new light will have to be specially dazzling in order to entrance me. I placed before the friends the following points on which I hold decided views:

1. Highest honesty must be introduced in the political life of the country if we are to make our mark as a nation. This presupposes at the present moment a very firm and definite acceptance of the creed of Truth at any cost.

2. Swadeshi must be our immediate goal. The future aspirants after membership of the Council should be asked to pledge themselves to an out and out protection of the country's industries—specially cloth manufacture.

3. Definite acceptance of Hindustani—a resultant of Hindi and Urdu as a National Language of intercourse in the immediate future. The would-be members will be, therefore, pledged so to work in the Imperial Councils as to introduce Hindustani and in the Local Councils the respective vernaculars at least as an optional medium for the time being till we are able to dispense with English for the conduct of National Affairs. They will also be pledged to introduce Hindustani as a compulsory second language in our schools with Devanagari or Urdu as an optional script. English will be recognised as a language of imperial intercourse, diplomacy and international commerce.

4. Acceptance of the principles of redistribution of provinces so far as possible on a linguistic basis at the earliest opportunity.

5. Hindu-Mohamedan Unity, in its essence and from a political and religious stand point as an unalterable article of faith. This contemplates mutual help, mutual toleration and recognition of the sufferings of one section to the sufferings of all. This will exclude from the official programme of the League, the unity propaganda by means of inter-dining and inter-marriage and will include vigorous co-operation on the Khilafat question. In my discussions amongst the friends I have also told them that I will not think of asking for official recognition of my creed of civil disobedience and that I do not belong to any party and would like to make the League a non-party organization helping all honest men if they are otherwise capable of doing justice to the service they may choose irrespective of party. The League, according to my opinion, cannot become an anti-Congress organisation but it should work as it is now

doing to further the interests of the Congress. Do you advise me, knowing me as you do with my qualifications and limitations, to join the League?"

What advice Sastri gave is not known, but Gandhiji became the President of the Home Rule League and immediately started playing with fire.

Whilst in this letter to Sastri written on 20th March, Gandhiji was still thinking in terms of Council entry, ten days earlier—10th March,—he had made up his mind to take to non-co-operation which meant boycott of the new Montague legislatures. In a manifesto dated 10th March, he wrote:

"Now a word as to what may be done if the demands are not granted. The barbarous method is warfare, open or secret. This must be ruled out if only because it is impracticable. It I could but persuade every one that it is always bad, we should gain all lawful ends much quicker. The power that an individual or a nation forswearing violence generates is a power that is irresistible. But my argument today against violence is based upon pure expediency, i.e., its utter futility. Non-co-operation is, therefore, the only remedy left open to us. It is the cleanest remedy as it is the most effective when it is absolutely free from all violence. It becomes a duty when co-operation means degradation or humiliation or an injury to one's cherished religious sentiment. England cannot accept a meek submission by us to an unjust usurpation of rights which to Mussalmans means a matter of life and death. We may, therefore, begin at the top as also the bottom. Those who are holding offices of honour or emolument ought to give them up. Those who belong to the menial services under Government should do likewise. Non-co-operation does not apply to service under private individuals. I cannot approve of the threat of ostracism against those who do not adopt the remedy of non-co-operation. It is only a voluntary withdrawal which is effective. For voluntary withdrawal alone is a test of popular feeling and dissatisfaction. Advice to the soldiers to refuse to serve is premature. It is the last, not the first step. We should be entitled to take that step when the Viceroy, the Secretary of State and the Premier leave us. Moreover, every step withdrawing co-operation has to be taken with the greatest deliberation. We must proceed slowly so as to ensure retention of self-control under the fiercest heat".

Within a fortnight of issuing this manifesto, Gandhiji took the plunge. On the 6th of April was passed at a public meeting a Resolution on the lines of the above manifesto calling upon the people of India to non-co-operate with Government. The Resolution clearly suggested boycott of the new Reforms by way of boycott of the new Legislatures. The Resolution further enjoined complete non-co-operation with Government. On 9th April I received a telegram from Mrs. Besant asking if I and our Bombay friends would join her in protesting against the non-co-operation resolution. I immediately agreed. On 13th April, Sastri wrote from Delhi to Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar:

"I trust you have come back the fresher and wiser for your travel. Let me felicitate you first on the apology you received from your European assailant, and next on the warning you have issued to the public against the non-co-operation resolution of Mr. Gandhi. I feel sure the latter (the resolution, I mean) won't be acted on except by a very few. But it will lead to much misunderstanding, and there may be a little trouble if the Mohammedan Khansamas in the employ of Europeans take up the cry. Mr. Gandhi advocates it, I know. When I am gloomy, I fear the Khilafat movement is going to land us in disaster. I picture the Mohammedans breaking out here and there in futile mob-demonstrations. Hindus will foolishly join. When the punishments come, the latter will fare the worst for they haven't the provocation of the others. And the Secretary of State for India or at least the European community may use the affairs as a consideration for the postponement of the reform scheme. Is this a piling up of pessimistic fears?

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The party system, i.e., two large parties dividing the politicians, leaders and rank and file alike and also a section of the electors, are necessary for parliamentary government. But they are not now in being and will take years to evolve. They may not evolve at all, and we may be doomed to the unsatisfactory group system, the groups too being on communal and caste lines."

Mrs. Besant wrote in May, 1920:—

"The clouds hanging over India are very dark for there seems to be rising an antagonism between Europe and Asia which bodes ill for the future. European aggression in the Near

East is being sullenly watched by the Middle and Far East; the "Mandate" to France over Syria, that to Britain over Mesopotamia, are regarded as mere camouflage, as veiled annexation, and Asiatics can hardly be expected to contemplate serenely the attempt to dominate their continent and to force an alien civilisation down their throats: "Asia for Asiatics" is a cry of growing strength. Japan has sounded it in the remarkable *Asian Magazine* issued in Tokyo, and Asiatics would not be human if they submitted silently to the peril which menaces them. Europe to the West of Asia, America to the East, Australia and New Zealand to the South, to say nothing of the Dutch East Indies, menace her from the outside; Russian Siberia takes her northern border, India, Burma, Tonquin are under European rule; Persia is under European "influence"; Afghanistan and the Khanates are warlike but count for little; Japan, China, Tibet—what else can Asian Asia claim? Cannot Europe understand that Asia prefers her own ways to European ways, and that the "Awakening of Asia", to which I ventured to draw attention in my Presidential Address to the Indian National Congress in 1917 is a fact which Europe is not wise in ignoring. And now this growing resentment is suddenly crystallised in India by the cry to turn out the Turkey from Europe. And the Turk implies the Sultan, and the Sultan is the Khalifa, the "Commander of the Faithful". His it is to guard the Holy Places. None but a Muslim Ruler must preside over "the Island of Arabia". Since the time of the great prophet of Arabia that island has been the heritage of his followers and they will not submit to see it under European rule. Not for this did Indian Mussalmans fight shoulder to shoulder with the British in Mesopotamia to rob their Khalifa of his own. Hence the All-India Khilafat Conference, hence the local Khilafat Conferences in the three Presidencies, to say nothing of smaller gatherings elsewhere."

"And now arises a strange portent. A devout Hindu, an ascetic, a man full of faith in God and in the spirit of man, steps forward to join Shoukat Ali and Muhamad Ali, the two brothers who were set free at Christmas last after five years of internment and prison, and who came out into a New India, an India pulsating with life, an awakened nation. They left Hindus and Mussalmans quarreling, they found them united; both had realised their Nationhood, both knew themselves as Indians, and



they came out to find Islam in peril, the Islam for loyalty to which they had suffered so long. Now we have this trio, two Mussalmans and one Hindu, the Hindu, the champion of "soul-force against brute-force. Of physical violence he will have none. But he will try again his dangerous panacea of "passive resistance" *en masse*. Let Indians draw away from Government, refuse to co-operate with it in any way, Musalmans for the sake of their Khalifa, Hindus for the sake of the Musalmans. The proposal is made and accepted, and Mr. Gandhi formulated his resolution, and it is moved by him in Bombay, and later accepted by the All-India Khilafat Conference :

Mr. Gandhi moved the following resolution :—

"This meeting of Mohammedans and Hindus and other citizens of Bombay trusts that the Khilafat question will be solved consistently with the just demands of the Musalmans of India and with the solemn pledges of His Majesty's Ministers; and this meeting records its opinion that in the event of adverse decision being arrived at, it will be the duty of every Indian to withdraw co-operation from the Government, until the pledges are fulfilled and Moslem sentiment conciliated."

"Such resolutions might have been passed for months, perhaps for years, and nothing would have happened. At Calcutta, previously, a more virile note had been struck—Musalmans were to resign titles, seats in Councils, government employment, Police, Army. Very few answered to the appeal—perhaps half a dozen.

"The dynamic energy of the elder brother Shaukat Ali, came to the rescue, and in Madras he formulated his idea of successive steps in non-co-operation. In his presidential speech, he said :

"To save all useless discussion we have after very careful consideration come to the conclusion that the least temporal Power that a Khalifa required was that Turkey possessed before the war. It was not sufficient but we did not desire to open useless discussion.....In case our religious demands are treated with contempt, as we fear we must expect, after the plain speaking of Mr. Lloyd George and Lords Curzon and Bryce, Robert Cecil and others, then we, as God-fearing and believing Muslims, have no option left except to walk out of the British Empire. There will be no room in it for us. It would be eternal damnation for us to obey a King or his Government who is against

Islam. Our eternal salvation is very dear to us and for it we are ready to make all possible sacrifices. May God help us."

"He then described the successive steps:

"The first step in the non-co-operation movement would be the stopping of giving donations, war loans, giving up of honorary posts, titles, membership of Councils, etc. The second step will be the giving up of civil posts from the highest to the lowest ranks. The third step will be giving up Police and Military services. The fourth, non-payment of all kinds of taxes. We know what the above mean, what untold suffering will be our lot. We do not embark on this without fully realising what it means. It means a movement for absolute independence. We have promised Mahatma Gandhi as we believe we can only succeed in our present condition if we accept his principle that there should be no violence on our part while we are carrying on this propaganda. Any retaliation or use of violence even under grave provocation would damage our cause which is dearer to us than our life. Twenty or thirty deputations would soon be touring round the country to collect the signed pledges from Muslims, as after all it is they who should bear the greater part of the burden. It is a portion of their faith, a matter of life and death. Mahatma Gandhi would deal with our Hindu brethren in his own way.....He (the prophet Muhammad) made the supreme sacrifice of his life. He left his home and Holy Kaabah and did Hijarat (flight) to Medina. There too there was no place for him. His enemies persecuted him till God's assistance came to him and with it God's command: "Kill those who kill you until there should be no mischief left, and the only Kingdom remaining must be the Kingdom of God."

On the next day, the following resolution was passed:

"In consonance with the spirit of the Resolution adopted by the All-India Khilafat Committee, this Conference, in the event of the present agitation proving futile and ineffective, calls upon all Indians to resort to progressive abstentions from co-operation with Government in the following manner:

"Firstly to renounce all honorary posts, titles and membership of Legislative Councils. Secondly, to give up all remuneratory posts under Government service. Thirdly to give up all appointments with the Police and Military forces. Fourthly to refuse to pay taxes to Government. This was moved by a

Musalman, was seconded by the Hindu President of the Madras Congress Committee and four Hindu leaders of the "Nationalists" (they now regard the name of "Extremists" as an insult. I do not know why). They did not add the fifth step in words, but it is obvious that after the preliminary harmless canter of the first step, government administration will be paralysed by the second, the third will prevent the government from keeping internal order and preventing external aggression, and at this point not only criminals but Afghans, Pathans and other Central Asian Tribes will become unpleasantly prominent. The fourth step will complete the disorganisation of society. Such is the cheerful prospect with which India is faced."

"Long before the four steps are completed, Mr. Gandhi will have once more discovered that the population is not composed of all saints, and will presumably have withdrawn too late, as was his withdrawal from breaking "other laws" last year. He then admitted that the people were not ready for his method. When "God's Command" arrives as to killing, Mr. Gandhi will obviously have no more to do with the movement. But it will then be beyond control. Passive Resistance *en masse* will inevitably become active aggression. How the Khalifa will be helped by rioting in India is not apparent. If out of the 70 millions of Muslims in India, even one million emigrated to the Island of Arabia and fought there under the Khalifa, the proposal would be intelligible and might be effective. But to fill India with aimless rioting, with rapine and bloodshed seems irrelevant. Such is the condition of Indian affairs".

Again in June she records:

"On the top of Punjab troubles has come the Muslim question, which stirs to its very foundation the religious feelings of Musalmans, and has led to the "non-co-operation with Government"—a campaign, aimed at the complete paralysis of the Government. A few of us, very few, are writing and speaking vigorously against this. I have just returned from a journey of three thousand miles there and back—to oppose this at the All-India Congress Committee and at the Musalman Conference, where a little handful of us stood out against Non-co-operation, against the crowd of Muslims supported by the Hindu Extremists, who are making common cause with them".

In July, Lokmanya Tilak was lying seriously ill in Sardar-

Griha and though he was lingering on, he did not lose sight of the serious situation which was developing in India as a result of Gandhiji's campaign to start non-violent non-co-operation movement as a part of his agitation for restoration of the Khalifa. In view of Tilak's serious illness, my Home Rule friends and I dropped in to see him every evening and his sick bed-room became a most entertaining political club, Tilak and Khaparde holding the field and making off-the-record statements and comments on the crucial political issues of the time. Tilak said: "I have great respect and admiration for Gandhiji; but I do not like his politics. If he (Gandhi) would retire to the Himalayas and give up politics, I would send him fresh flowers from Bombay every day because of my respect for him". Tilak's eyes bristled with humour and laughter as he said this.

On the morning of 1st August, 1920, Lokmanya Tilak passed away. Just as we came to know of this, Gandhiji, Anusuyaben, Shankerlal, Umar, Jamnadas and myself visited Sardar Griha where Khaparde met us. Tilak's dead body was put up on the first floor landing in a sitting posture for people to have "Darshan" from the road. As we came down the steps, Gandhiji stood before the body, folded his hands and bent his head. As we got into the car, I asked him: "I saw you standing in front of Tilak's dead body for one full minute, bowing your head and folding your hands. What were you doing?" Gandhiji answered: "I was following the usual custom". This question today may sound strange, heartless and irrelevant when thousands are visiting Rajghat to pay respects to Gandhiji's Samadhi. But my question was asked not in a spirit of ridicule, but because Hindu philosophy has laid down that once the soul departs, the dead body is just dust. I am relating this small talk in a spirit of reverence both for Tilak and Gandhiji.

Within six weeks of Tilak's passing away, was held in Calcutta the Special Session of the Congress when Gandhiji through questionable means was able to get his Non-co-operation Resolution passed by a narrow majority. Lala Lajpat Rai was the President. Mrs. Besant, Jinnah, C. R. Das and the delegates from Maharashtra whose leader was Tilak opposed the resolution. It is futile now to speculate if Gandhiji would have carried the Resolution if Tilak had been alive. Jinnah, Mrs. Jinnah, Jayakar, Umar, Jamnadas, Shankerlal and myself went to Cal-

cutta by a Congress Special. Motilal Nehru, who had come to meet Jinnah at the Howrah Station told him in my presence that Gandhiji wanted to pass a non-co-operation resolution and that this would mean boycott of the legislatures and he (Motilal) suggested to Jinnah that all of them together, i.e., Jinnah, Malviya, C. R. Das, Lajpat Rai, Motilal Nehru, Mrs. Besant and others should combine to defeat the resolution. When the resolution was passed ten or twelve days later, Motilal, influenced by his son Jawaharlal, voted in favour of the resolution along with Gandhi. When the actual voting by poll was decided upon, it was felt that the resolution would be defeated, but next day when the poll took place, Umar Sobani and Shankerlal managed to add over a hundred delegates from the streets and got them to vote for the resolution. How this happened, nobody except Dr. Ambedkar has ever mentioned before. In 1920, there was no limit set on the number of delegates to the Congress.

As the Congress came to an end I rushed up to the first row where Mrs. Besant was seated, helped her to collect her papers and picked up her attache-case. As she and I were about to go out I heard a big clash outside the pandal. The volunteers had come to blows. I told Mrs. Besant: "We shall have to wait here for some time, as there is some fighting going on outside." Just as I said this I found Ruttie Jinnah pulling me, saying: "Come on, take me out". I replied: "We cannot go, there is some fighting going on outside". Ruttie said: "That is exactly what I want to see, let us go quickly". I drew her attention to Mrs. Besant being with me and promptly turned to Mrs. Besant and said: "The fighting seems to be over now, we can go" and I safely conducted Mrs. Besant out, and fortunately the fighting had really come to an end.

Before returning to Bombay, Anusuyaben, Shankerlal, Indulal Yajnik and myself spent two happy days in Shanti-Niketan.

Within a fortnight of our return to Bombay, Gandhiji threw a bombshell at Jinnah. He never liked Jinnah's opposition to his (Gandhi's) joining hands with the Ali Brothers and their fanatic friends in regard to the Khilafat agitation. Gandhiji, following the policy of opportunism and expediency and working for a short term profit basis made friends and unholy alliance with

Muslim communal leaders Mohamed Ali and his brother, Shoukat Ali and the Muslim Moulvis and Maulanas—religious and fanatic bigots. He promised them his, the Congress's and the Hindus' support for the Khilafat and in exchange he asked for their support for Indian Home Rule and stopping cow slaughter. The orthodox Hindus thought that they had won a great victory by getting the Mohamedans to agree to stop cow slaughter! Gandhiji was successful in this horse-trading deal. Gandhiji was warned by Jinnah and Umar Sobani not to encourage the religious fanaticism of the Muslim priests and their equally ignorant, illiterate and superstitious Muslim followers. The dictum of Gandhiji and his new found colleagues—the Ali Brothers—was that if one was not with them, one was against them. If you did not join Gandhiji, you are a traitor, you are stooge and agent of the British and you are working against the interests of the country. Jinnah was prominent amongst those who suffered from this calumny.

Jinnah was still a power to be reckoned with as the President of the Home Rule League, Bombay, and Munshi and I were the Secretaries in place of Umar and Shankerlal who had resigned after the passing of the non-co-operation resolution on 6th April, 1920. They identified themselves thoroughly and completely with Gandhiji's non-co-operation movement and therefore could not continue as Secretaries of the Home Rule League. After the Calcutta Session in September, 1920 and before the Congress Session in Nagpur in December, Gandhiji moved to neutralise Jinnah's political influence and what he did then has a sinister bearing on what is happening in India, during the last 18 years since Independence. Gandhiji's followers in the Home Rule League, under his instructions and directions, sent a requisition for a special meeting of the Home Rule League to change its name and its constitution. Instead of Home Rule within the British Commonwealth (Dominion Status) he brought Purna Swaraj—complete Independence—and in place of constitutional agitation, he substituted peaceful agitation, which included non-co-operation and mass civil disobedience. The name of the Home Rule League was changed to Swaraj Sabha. These changes which fundamentally altered the original objects and name of the League were not acceptable to Jinnah and his friends and Jinnah, Jayakar, Munshi, myself and 15 others

resigned our membership of the Home Rule League—the new Swaraj Sabha. After getting Jinnah and his friends out by pirating on the Home Rule League, Gandhiji killed the Swaraj Sabha and it ceased to exist.

Just about this time, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad who was a Puisne Judge of the Bombay High Court sent for me one afternoon. We had never met before. As I entered his Judge's Chamber, I asked him: "You sent for me?" He answered: "You are Kanji, yes, I sent for you". His next words were: "I have heard that you are opposed to Gandhi's non co-operation movement and you are a good organiser. You and I are going to work together; are you agreeable?" I replied: "Yes, certainly". He said, "Within a few days I am going to resign my office as a Judge and as I want to stand for the Central Legislative Assembly under the new Montague Act, I want your help. Also, we have to fight Gandhiji's non-co-operation movement. We have to work hard. You must come to see me every afternoon at 5 and if you cannot by any chance come at 5, you must come and see me at my bungalow at 10 in the evening after dinner". Thus began a close political and personal relationship between Sir Chimanlal and myself for which I have always been most grateful to him. He was a good senior to work with and he was considerate and helpful to me. As soon as he was free from the High Court Judgeship, we started an anti-non-co-operation Committee, with Sir Chimanlal as Chairman and Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Sir Cowasji Jehangir and myself as Secretaries. Sir Dinshaw Wacha was one of the members. The principal activities of this Committee were to issue literature by way of leaflets and pamphlets, showing the utter futility of Gandhiji's negative and harmful non-co-operation, also to arrange public meetings for the same object. The work on the Committee kept me busy for over six months. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and my brother, Jamnadas, were elected uncontested to the Legislative Assembly. Gandhiji's friends in Bombay could not put up a candidate against them but they were hoping that some one else outside their non-co-operation party would stand against Sir Chimanlal and Jamnadas. We were able to outwit this kind of tactics on the part of the non-co-operators. Suddenly, however, Sir Chimanlal accepted membership of Sir George Lloyd's Executive Council and Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy was elected in his

place. Sir Chimanlal's entering the Government of Bombay as an Executive Councillor helped me in my political and legislative career. More of it later.

The annual session of the Congress was to be held during the Christmas week at Nagpur. Setalvad was anxious that Mrs. Besant should attend this Congress and once again oppose Gandhiji's non-co-operation movement as she had done at the Special Session in Calcutta in September. I wrote and telegraphed to Mrs. Besant Chimanlal's suggestion. She wrote to me from 'New India', Madras, on 30th November:

"Your letter reached me in Calcutta. I had also your telegram. Thanks for both.

The telegram came the day after I had decided to hold the T. S. Convention here. I could not wait longer. There was no answer as to Setalvad and other leaders going, and it is useless, after the Calcutta experience, to go unless there are about 1,000 persons who will support. It is clear, from the Congress Committee's votes that the majority mean to change the creed. Gandhiji is practically Dictator and it is better to let him and the Nationalists fight out their differences and let us rally all who are against non-co-operation and for the Reform Act into a working Association on the lines of the old Congress, and leave the new one to go its own way. Gandhi is getting madder and madder. The old All-India Home Rule League is now a Non-co-operation body and cares nothing for Home Rule.

I am glad Sir George Lloyd is favourable to the idea of a deputation; I wrote to him before leaving Bombay last time and he promised to "consider". Madras Liberals are not at all inclined to go to the Congress, nor are the Bengal. Your Committee is doing good work and the fight against non-co-operation is now the most important".

I went to Adyar to attend the Theosophical Convention. Before returning to Bombay, I bought about twenty books on Buddhism. I thought I would have plenty of time to study Buddhism but this was not to be.

At the Nagpur Congress in December, Gandhiji carried the day. Not only was the non-co-operation resolution confirmed but the creed of the Congress was changed. The new creed eliminated the declared adherence of the Congress to the British connection and constitutional methods of agitation. The leaders



like Pandit Malwiya, Jinnah and Khaparde were shouted down because they dared differ from Gandhiji's point of view. Jinnah made one more effort to stop the country from taking the negative attitude of non-co-operation in Indian politics. He made a brave speech in opposition to Gandhiji's but did not succeed. Mrs. Besant was totally opposed to Gandhiji's movement of civil disobedience and his cry for total independence as against continuing to be a member of the British Commonwealth. Another resolution which has caused serious trouble in India since Independence demanded division of India into linguistic provinces. Neither the world nor India have understood the philosophy of Gandhiji in wanting to divide India into linguistic provinces or to give up the use of English in India. Gandhiji as a philosophical anarchist was an isolationist. He desired breaking of contacts between India and the world. What better way could he find to achieve his object than to give up the use of English? Apart from severance of the human, political, economic and cultural relation, the giving up of the English language would mean that India would remain for all time to come backward in medicine, science and technology. But this backwardness meant to Gandhiji no harm to India; for he did not believe either in medical or scientific research. By cutting up India in linguistic provinces, Gandhiji's object was to break up relationships and contacts between one province and another. It did not matter to him that such division on linguistic basis would create regional jealousies and rivalries between one state and another and would result in the long run, -as one already sees the tendency towards it, of splitting the country into different units at the cost of unity of India.

Gandhiji took over in Nagpur in December, 1920, the control of the Congress which he maintained to keep with varying degrees of success right till the end of his life in January, 1948.

The main planks of the non-co-operation resolution were:

- (1) boycott of the Legislatures,
- (2) boycott of the satanic law-courts,
- (3) boycott of the satanic schools and colleges,
- (4) surrender of titles.

Gandhiji promised that he would get Swaraj for India within one year of 31st December, 1920, i.e., by 31st December, 1921.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE NEW REFORMS

ON my return to Bombay at the end of the first week of January, 1921, I looked forward to a quieter political life than I had during the last five years. But that was not to be. I found my labour friends from Parel waiting for me. Some workers in the Kohinoor Mills had struck work without giving prior notice of their intention to do so and without having submitted to the Management their grievances and demands. It was a lightning strike affecting over 75 workers. The Management would not send for them to find out and discuss what their grievances were. The workers had got into a blind alley and there was a deadlock. They approached me for help. They came to see me after 10 p.m. one night. It was considered unsafe for the workers to meet a non-working outside labour agitator during the day lest the C.I.D. would molest them afterwards for asking for the help of an outsider. After they had discussed with me their grievances, I told them that they were wrong in going on strike without first formulating their demands and submitting them to the Management. I, therefore, advised them to return to work and then I would take up their case with the Management. They agreed. Thereupon, I telephoned to the Manager, a Lancashire man, requesting for a meeting. I told the Manager that the men were wrong in going on a lightning strike and that I had advised them to return to work, would the Manager agree to negotiate with me the redress of their grievances? The Manager agreed. The men returned to work and within three days, the Management satisfied the workers regarding their grievances. I addressed a public meeting of the workers and announced the satisfactory end of the dispute. The report of this week's events appeared in the Press, and it was seen by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Member of the Executive Council. When I met him that evening, he asked me why I had not mentioned to him before

my interest in Labour. He added Lloyd and he were looking for somebody in the Labour world who could be nominated for Labour in the Bombay Legislative Council. The Montague Act had provided for such nomination by the Governor as there were no properly formed Trade Unions in Bombay at that time. Sir Chimanlal said he would recommend me for such a nomination and Lloyd would most certainly accept his recommendation. Within a week, I received a letter from R. M. Maxwell, then Private Secretary to Lloyd, and later Home Member in Bombay and afterwards Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, informing me that H.E. the Governor had been pleased to nominate me Member for Labour in the Bombay Legislative Council. Among the other nominated members were Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Sir Cawasji Jehangir and Rao Bahadur Sathe from Sholapur. The "Times of India" editorially commented that it could understand and appreciate the nomination of these last three who were well-known public men of importance and the Times added: "Who is this Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas who has been nominated and who has never been heard of before?" I was then twenty-eight and was the youngest Member of the Bombay Legislative Council and Sir Henry Lawrence, Finance Member, and later Acting Governor of Bombay, always referred to me in the Council as "The Hon'ble the Baby of the House".

My Date with Destiny had arrived. Mrs. Besant's blessing given to me in May, 1919, that a great opportunity for more service would come to me had worked. Mrs. Besant was extremely pleased. I will pose a question without attempting to answer it. If the strike at the Kohinoor Mills had not taken place, would I have been nominated to the Bombay Council and how would have my work during the last 45 years—social, labour and political, been affected by not entering the Legislative Council?

The Duke of Connaught, Queen Victoria's Second Son and Uncle of King George V. inaugurated the Bombay Legislative Council and I shook hands with him then. I met him again at the Reception in his honour at the Government House, Bombay. It was on the 9th February, 1921, that he inaugurated the Parliament of India. He brought a message of good-will from the King Emperor. The Duke said he had laid aside leisure to re-visit India in order to heal wounds, to unite unhappy differences, to

persuade all men to forgive and forget. His personal inauguration of the reformed Legislatures, both Provincial and Central, provided the occasion for speeches which were balm to the wounds of India. Less perhaps by his actual words, though these of themselves, brought a message of peace and good-will to thousands of souls momentarily embittered, than by his gracious personality, the Duke accomplished in India a work which no one but the son of Queen Victoria could have performed. His speech was an inspiring one, and it ended with a personal appeal for forgiveness and forbearance on both sides which deeply moved the hearts of every one present. "Since I landed", he said, "I have felt around me bitterness and estrangement between those who have been and should be friends. The shadow of Amritsar has lengthened over the fair face of India. I know how deep is the concern felt by His Majesty the King Emperor at the terrible chapter of events in the Punjab. No one can deplore those events more sincerely and more intensely than I do myself. I have reached a time of life when I most desire to heal wounds and to re-unite those who have been disunited. In what must be, I feel, my last visit to the India I love so well, here in the new capital, inaugurating a new constitution, I am moved to make you a personal appeal, put in the simple words that come from my heart, not to be coldly and critically interpreted. My experience tells me that misunderstanding usually means mistakes on either side. As an old friend of India, I appeal to you all—British and Indians—to bury along with the dead past the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past, to forgive where you have to forgive, and to join hands and to work together to realise the hopes that arise from today".

How unfortunate that this straightforward stirring appeal from the old Duke did not evoke any friendly feeling from Gandhiji. How different the history of India would have been if Gandhiji had responded favourably to the Duke's message. How happy India would have been at the end of the conflict between U.K. and India. Both the countries would have worked together in peace and harmony, giving strength to each other. The British Commonwealth would have been so strong that Hitler would never have dared to plunge the world in a Second World War. The economic and political crises of the late Twen-

\*ties and early Thirties would have been averted both in U.K. and India. The Hindu-Muslim problem would have been solved satisfactorily. There would never have occurred the riots and killings of the Twenties, Thirties and Forties. Pakistan was never talked of and dreamt of then. India would have been one strong unit.

But, Gandhiji did not take the pro-offered hand of goodwill and friendship. Instead he went his own way of destruction and disruption. He pursued his programme of boycott of law courts for which he received a poor response; boycott of schools and colleges, the partial success of which made the political situation more unstable. Gandhiji called upon the students from colleges and schools to boycott "satanic institutions" and to leave their studies and plunge into national work. This call on the students had temporary success, which resulted later in terrible hardship to the teen-age students, who, disobeying parental authority and emotionally unbalanced, left their studies in a fit of excitement and ruined their future careers. Apart from this harm to individual students—there were hundreds of them—a spirit of defiance to law and order started in the minds of the students, and today, forty-five years after this lawlessness-spirit was inculcated in the students, the country is suffering from its reactions. Strikes and walk-out of students, under or without the slightest provocation, are still occurring and are a source of great annoyance to the Congress Governments. The present unjustified spirit of defiance was born through the teachings of the Mahatma and parrot-like repeated by the Congress leaders, who are now holding high offices of ministers.

Mrs. Besant always steadfastly opposed active participation of students in politics. As far back as in December, 1905, she had written to her friend, Miss Esther Bright:

"I encourage our elder boys to study social and political questions, to discuss them, and so on, but obeying orders from a far-away caucus to demonstrate on a question they do not understand, is another thing. These same people who made our boys agitate, called out four thousand boys in a big college, and these poor lads are now stranded, their education stopped, and they became helpless. I have always done my own fighting, and not asked boys to take

the brunt of the struggle!"

The National Home Rule League and the Anti-Non-Co-operation Committee published scores of pamphlets and leaflets condemning Gandhiji's programme of boycott of schools and colleges. As the Secretary of both these organisations it fell to me to be the publisher of all this literature and it produced a healthy reaction on the public mind. Further, we arranged many public meetings and lectures of protest in all parts of Bombay and among those whose names were advertised as speakers were Mrs. Besant, Srinivas Sastri, Chimanlal Setalvad, R. P. Paranjpye and Sir Cowasji Jehangir. These meetings were broken up by the followers of Gandhiji and they ended in disorder and the speakers were not allowed to speak. Mrs. Besant kept standing on the platform for full one hour, the crowds shouting, booing and hissing her. Chimanlal Setalvad was the Chairman at that meeting. Only after standing one hour at the table did Mrs. Besant withdraw. At another meeting addressed by Sastri also at the Excelsior Theatre, the Gandhian crowds got so violent that Sastri had to leave the Theatre by the back door but I was assaulted. My clothes were torn but fortunately I did not receive any physical injury. This was reported in the next day's newspapers and by the Associated Press all over India. Gandhiji knew of these meetings being broken up but did not condemn the violent and insulting behaviour of his followers. But C. F. Andrews was shocked. These broken up meetings brought disfavour and more opposition to Gandhiji's movement. But Gandhiji still persisted.

He talked of Swaraj within one year as from December 31, 1920. He never defined Swaraj, he called it 'Purna Swaraj'. By this he meant Government of the self, rather "self-Government"—philosophic anarchy rather than constitutional progress; natural and primitive simplicity, rather than economic, political and industrial advance.

The Government of India rightly decided not to take any action against Gandhiji for his non-co-operation and boycott movements because they thought that due to his inherent weaknesses and absurdities, the movement would not catch. On the 15th February, 1921, a resolution was moved by my brother, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, recommending the Governor-General to declare the firm resolve of the Government of India to main-

tain the connection of India with the British Empire on the principle of perfect racial equality; to express regret that the Martial Law administration of the Punjab departed from this principle, and to mete out deterrent punishment to officers who have been guilty; and to satisfy himself that adequate compensation was awarded to the families of those killed or injured at the Jallianwalla Bagh. The notable feature of the debate which ensued was the deep sense of responsibility felt both by the official and non-official speakers for the present and future effects of the words they uttered. The speeches of the Indian Members revealed no rancour and no desire for vengeance. They made it plain that they were fighting for a principle. On the other side, the officials re-asserted with an added emphasis which this occasion had for the first time made possible, their disapproval of certain acts which had given rise to such bitter resentment among the educated classes of India. Sir William Vincent, who led the debate from the Government benches, while in no way underestimating the grave nature of the disturbances, the crimes of unparalleled violence that had marked them; the very difficult situation with which the officers of Government were confronted; and the propriety of the behaviour of the great majority of these officers; made plain the deep regret of the administration at the improper conduct and improper orders of certain individual officers; and their firm determination that so far as human foresight could prevail, any repetition would be for ever impossible. He repudiated emphatically the suggestion that Indian lives were valued more lightly than the lives of Englishmen, expressing his sorrow that the canons of conduct for which the British Administration stood had been in certain cases violated. He announced the Government's intention to deal generously with those who had suffered in the disturbances. The sincerity and the earnestness of the Home Member's desire to assuage the feelings of Indians exercised a profound effect upon the Assembly, particularly because Sir William Vincent was notorious as a re-actionary. Acknowledging the sympathetic attitude of the Government, the Assembly agreed to welcome the Duke of Connaught's appeal; to let bye-gones be bye-gones, and to sink the whole lamentable affair in oblivion. The third clause, calling for deterrent punishment was withdrawn, and the resolution as amended was

then accepted by the whole House.

On February 24, 1921, Mrs. Besant wrote to me:

"I have now received from you and paid over five instalments of Rs. 1,000 each (the last was 500,300,200) out of the Rs. 6000 promised, so there is only one more to come. It has been very generous of you". Again, on March 15, she wrote: "Will you meet me by the Madras Mail, Sunday morning, please," and again on March 9, she wrote: "I am very glad to have your letter, and to hear that you have made your first speech (in the Council). I am sure you will be useful. I cannot fix the Surat visit till I know my movements. There is no record here of the addresses of my Bombay (City) Troops. Will you find them, and send them to me? I want:

	Scout Master, name & Address; name of troop.
Asstt.	„ „ (if any) „ „ „ „
	Cub Master „ „ „ „ pack.
Asstt.	„ (if any) „ „ „ „

The District Commissioner is our Patwardhan, and a packet of leaflets has to issue to him. Please deliver these as soon as possible, and let every Scoutmaster explain it to his troop in the vernacular, if the boys do not understand it".

Again on March 15:

"Will you meet me by the Madras Mail, Sunday morning please, and secure me a berth for Karachi that same evening from Colaba? I am not quite sure of the train, and have not the railway guide with me, but will write tomorrow."

On April 2nd, Lord Reading, 61, arrived in India to take over his responsibilities as the Viceroy and Governor-General. It is curious to note that according to Lord Reading's son "there was indeed every likelihood that Lord Reading would find himself out of pocket at the end of the time and under the necessity of finding new sources of income at the age of 66, with all the wear and tear of five years as Viceroy adding their cumulative weight to an already over-strenuous life". When Lord Reading went to consult Lord Curzon about his new job, he found Lord Curzon lying on the simplest of brass bedsteads, and he was particularly surprised to note that even the hair-brushes were of the plainest wooden-backed sort.

Amongst others whose names were mentioned as likely suc-



cessors to Lord Chelmsford, were over and above Lord Reading, Sir Austin Chamberlain, Mr. Churchill, Lord Willingdon and Edwin Montague. But Lloyd George selected Lord Reading, his most senior colleague and Lord Chief Justice of England. Montague would, of course, have been the best choice from the point of view of India. Montague according to Lord Beaverbrook "believed that Lloyd George had failed to carry out a pledge to appoint him Viceroy of India which Montague greatly desired, pressing his claim without success for nearly a year".

In his first speech on landing in Bombay, in reply to the Civic Address at the Gateway of India, Reading referred to the aspect of justice upon which he had repeatedly laid stress in his speeches before his departure from England and said: "I note especially your sympathetic reference to the ancient race to which I belong, and I observe with pleasure that you state that your pride in welcoming me is enhanced by this circumstance. It is my only connection with the East until the present moment and this leads me to wonder whether perhaps, by some fortunate almost indefinitely subtle sub-consciousness, it may quicken and facilitate my understanding of the aims and aspirations, the trials and tribulations, the joys and sorrows of the Indian people, and assist me to catch the almost inarticulate cries and inaudible whispers of those multitudes who sometimes suffer most and yet find it difficult, if not impossible, to express their needs. As Viceroy I shall be privileged to practise justice in larger fields than in the courts of law. The justice now in my charge is not confined within statutes or law reports; it is a justice that is unfettered and has regard to all conditions and circumstances, and should be pursued in close alliance with sympathy and understanding. Above all it must be regardless of distinction of race, creed or class".

An interesting incident took place at the ceremony when Reading took his Oath of Office in the Bombay University Convocation Hall. I was sitting about ten feet away from him. As the oath was being administered to him, the New Testament was handed to him. He saw it and asked for the Old Testament. It took ten minutes to search for a copy of the Old Testament from the University Library and the ceremony was held up. When the torn and tattered copy was handed to him, he took his oath with his hat on, which was part of Jewish practice.

One of the very first non-officials who met Reading in Bombay was Mrs. Annie Besant. Reading had specially suggested that she should meet him on the very day of his taking office and she had come down from Adyar to meet him. Immediately on her return after her talk with Reading at the Bombay Government House, I met her at Lunch. She was cheerful she told me. Lord Reading told her that he had come with a blank cheque from Lloyd George with full authority to settle with India and he hoped to see India free and independent, happy and contented before he finished his five years term as Viceroy. Lord Reading attributed the main trouble in India to Amritsar, Jallianwalla Bagh outrages and massacre. He told Mrs. Besant that he would do his best to make compensation for the actions of Michael O'Dwyer and General Dyer. He asked for Mrs. Besant's help in putting matters right in India. The Viceroy complained to Mrs. Besant of the numerous chaprasis who were waiting on him and said bitterly that India was far too poor to stand all the pomp and pagentry forced on it by the British officials and that he would put a stop to it. Later on, however, he and Lady Reading fell victims to these big ceremonies and took great pride in them.

On 28th April, Mrs. Besant wrote to me: "I have three letters of yours. First, as to Scouts. All our Scouts should join. The movement is framing well and will be kept on Indian lines.

I read *Young India* (April 13th). I think he (Gandhi) must be going mad. Also I saw Lajpat Rai's speech.

I doubt if the Government will touch the Ali Brothers till the Afghan Mission is safely back on Indian soil. There is a bad move in Malabar; the Congress Conference was followed by a Tenants', and they would not hear the Malabar Member on his Tenancy Bill, but declared Non-co-operation against their landlords, which probably means refusal to pay rent.

Our Reform Conference went admirably, and we formed a very strong association to carry on political education and fight N. C. O.

I am asked to preside at another Conference in the South, and think I shall go".

On 6th May, she wrote:

"If so many people are away, I do not think a Conference in the very centre of Gandhism could be a success. The Govern-

ment have taken the steamer. I was going in on June 4, and the P & O offered me June 11th. I have asked for May 28th, as June 11 makes me late for my first London lecture. I enclosed a telegraph form to wire me but have not yet heard anything. Perhaps you could find out. I have not seen Natarajan's remarks, but he is always hostile to me. I could preside if I leave on the 4th June."

On May 8th, she wrote:

'I sent you a telegram yesterday on the receipt of your good news that a son was born to you. I hope he will grow up into as good a man as his father.

I had a telegram yesterday that the P & O are giving me a berth on s.s. Caledonia, out of Bombay on 28th. That is fortunate for me, as it takes me to London in time for the English T. S. Convention, which they had fixed so that I might preside. But I do not like going away. If you fixed a Conference, say at Surat, on the 25th and 26th say, I could preside, but perhaps it would be better later, as time is wanted for proper preparation. I should like to have a day in Bombay before leaving, say I must arrive on the 27th and I go to Simla for the Press Committee, I should arrive from there. But I shall know dates better in a few days."

During the first four months of 1921, Gandhiji travelled far and wide in South India, collecting funds at public meetings for Harijans and for popularising hand-spinning, prohibition and Hindu-Muslim Unity. At Coimbatore, over 400 prostitutes met him and asked for his help. He told them that they should give up their profession and take to hand-spinning. A working day of 7 to 8 hours' hand-spinning would give them an income of about 15 to 20 naye paise per day! History is the poorer for not recording the responses and the reactions of the prostitutes to Gandhiji's panacea for their ills. The Ali Brothers were, during these months, making disturbing speeches inciting violence, though they were wedded to Gandhiji's campaign of non-violent non-co-operation and had promised him that they would not preach and excite violence.

The most important event of 1921 was Gandhiji's meetings with Lord Reading in Simla in May, 1921, followed by an apology by the Ali Brothers—Mohamed Ali and Shoukat Ali. Pandit Madan Mohan Malwiya in whom the Viceroy had great con-

idence, C. F. Andrews, Gandhiji's friend, and Tej Bahadur Sapru, Reading's Law Member, thought it would be easier to tackle Gandhiji all by himself with quiet atmosphere of Simla, far away from his wild irresponsible political henchmen and colleagues. Gandhiji, the non-co-operator, called on the Viceroy, by writing his name in the Viceroy's Visitors' Book and this enabled Reading to invite Gandhiji for talks.

Lord Reading wrote to his son: "I rather expect we shall meet during the next day or two. He (Gandhi) arrived today in Simla. There is no doubt that his arrival in Simla is solely in connection with the action of intermediaries and provided he makes application to me in the proper way for interview, there will be no difficulty in granting it. But I have taken a firm stand against sending for him until he makes the first step".

The first meeting took place on May 13, and was followed in quick succession by five more meetings. Altogether those six interviews lasted fourteen hours—spread over a week. Lajpat Rai, the Congress President, had four hours and Mrs. Besant one and a half hours. Lord Reading expressed his resentment at the violent speeches made by the Ali Brothers and Gandhiji said that he was travelling all the time and had no time to look into newspapers and, therefore, he was not able to read what the Ali Brothers had said! Reading showed him extracts from Ali Brothers' speeches and Gandhiji agreed to get an apology from the Ali Brothers for having preached violence.

Mrs. Besant came to Bombay. Soon after this, confidentially she gave me the whole story of the happenings in Simla. She particularly asked me not to talk about these events to anybody but to treat them as secret. Mrs. Besant was amazed that Gandhiji had given this undertaking to the Viceroy and added that if the Ali Brothers did apologise as undertaken by Gandhiji, that would be the end of their political careers and the collaboration between Gandhiji and them. Mrs. Besant was still more amazed, she told me, that Gandhiji should have given this undertaking without so much as consulting his colleagues, and asked me how he could do such a thing.

Reading's reactions on Gandhiji's visit are worth noting. First about Gandhiji's non-violence; secondly about his promise to get Ali Brothers to apologise for their violent speeches. Writing to his son, Reading said: "His (Gandhi's) religious views are

I believe genuinely held and he is convinced to a point almost bordering on fanaticism that non-violence and love will give India its independence and enable it to withstand the British Government. His religious and moral views are admirable and indeed are on a remarkably high altitude, but I must confess that I find it difficult to understand his practice of them in politics”.

Reading shrewdly summed up the true significance of the episode thus :

“Mohamed Ali is a real factor in the situation; he is the ostensible link between Muhammedan and Hindu. If trouble comes between him and Gandhi, it means the collapse of bridge over the gulf between Hindu and Muhammedan. If Mohamed Ali does what Gandhi desires and that no doubt will be to make the declaration—Mohamed Ali will be lowered in the public esteem; his position as a leader would be seriously impaired and the most disturbing factor of peace at the moment will be quietened.”

Lord Reading's biographer—his son—comments on the Ali Brothers' humiliation: “Lord Reading manoeuvred Mr. Gandhi and his associates into a most unpleasant dilemma. If the Ali Brothers had refused to agree to his terms, a big wedge would have been driven between them and Mr. Gandhi and the Government would have gained enormous prestige for a successful prosecution carried on in the face of open and boastful threats.”

Malwiya took a very active part in getting Gandhiji to agree to pull up the Ali Brothers and it would not be unfair to suggest that history repeated itself in December, 1945, when after his talks with Casey, Governor of Bengal, and Wavell, the Congress Working Committee, at the instance of Gandhiji, re-affirmed its creed of non-violence. The speeches of the Congress leaders during the four months—August to Nov. 1945—were anything but non-violent.

To come back to Ali Brothers and Gandhiji. Gandhiji did not take his senior Congress colleagues into confidence as to the result of his mission to Simla but he worked on the Ali Brothers successfully. One fine morning, a few days later, the news of the Ali Brothers' apology was flashed throughout the Press in India. The Congress leaders were shocked. Motilal Nehru wrote to Gandhiji on June 3: “We have the indisputable fact

that the leader of the N.C.O. movement has been in treaty with the Government of India, and has secured the suspension of the prosecution of Ali Brothers by inducing them to give a public apology and an undertaking..... Very serious questions affecting the whole movement arise for consideration. Indeed it seems to me that the whole principle of non-co-operation has been given away". Das's reaction against Gandhiji was equally strong.

An amusing incident in Simla must be mentioned. Pusseyfoot Johnson, the renowned Prohibitionist from U.S.A., was invited to Lunch at the Viceregal Lodge. It so happened that at this lunch, there was no other male guest and Johnson as a good democrat having no settled convictions as to the right procedure on such occasions but seeing the ladies of the party courtesy to Their Excellencies on being presented, promptly followed their example, with disastrous results to himself. He lost his balance and dived headlong on to the carpet. This imposed a considerable strain upon the self-control of Their Excellencies, their staff and the guests!

Mrs. Besant left India on 28th May. She wrote to me from London on 7th July:

"Your letters are always very welcome with their home news and account of your own work. I have little time for writing, the calls on me being incessant.

"I am a little troubled by the scanty news from India, mentioning trouble in Madras and Aligarh, as well as incendiary fires in Kumaon. So little comes here from India. We must, of course, expect some rioting, before things settle down.

"Everything here goes very well, huge meetings and much enthusiasm and my health keeps good though I do not feel as strong as in India"

On July 21, she wrote:

"It is wonderful Gandhi getting his crore, if it materialises (This refers to Gandhi collecting one Crore for Tilak Swaraj Fund). Madras only contributed about Rs. 57,000/-! It is greater in principle than practice. But Gandhi's new programme—a real breach of faith—is dangerous.

"My ship is the *Malwa*, out of Marseilles Saturday morning, Aug. 13".

## CHAPTER XIV

### GANDHIJI AND PROHIBITION

IN writing about prohibition, one has to remember that one is not writing on a clean slate. The whole problem of prohibition has been entangled with all kinds of cobwebs—idealistic, religious, practical, sentimental, political, and further confused because of vested interests, and it is not easy to present an objective review.

Gandhiji was the father of prohibition, and the Congress Party, because of the lead by Gandhiji on this subject, has gone as far as putting prohibition as one of the directive principles in the Constitution of India. Article 47 of the Constitution of India says:

“The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health:”

This is the idealistic but blind approach to prohibition without giving due consideration to see how far it is practicable and without giving any thought as to the methods of enforcing it. The parrot cry is “Gandhiji wants prohibition, the country must have prohibition”. The general Indian approach to prohibition is coloured by religious and sentimental attitudes with this difference that those who hold such strong views against drinks do not generally try to force their views to make prohibition legally enforceable.

As regards the practicability of prohibition, no thought has been given to gauge the possibility of success and methods of its enforcement.

The last is vested interests, those in the liquor trade. It is a

very powerful vested interest in the world, including India and the clamour of opposition is extremely vocal and influential.

With these preliminary remarks, I propose to deal with the problem of prohibition as was preached by Gandhiji; and in doing so, I am writing on this problem not just as of today but carry back my story as far back as 1919, over forty seven years ago. I must confess to start with that I am a hundred per cent teetotaller from birth. And this personal habit of mine is just a personal habit and I do not force other people to accept me as a model for others, deeply opposed though I am to consuming any kind of alcoholic drink.

Going back to 1919, when the British Government of India introduced the ill-fated Rowlatt Bill inspite of the unanimous opposition of all political parties in the country, Gandhiji started the equally ill-fated Satyagraha movement, three of its principal planks being mass civil disobedience, prohibition and repeal of the Salt Tax. Picketing of liquor shops in Bombay was one of the weapons to help the bringing in of prohibition. The foreign Government of Bombay wanted to make as much revenue out of the sale of licenses of liquor shops as they could and practically every textile mill in Bombay was surrounded by half a dozen Indian liquor shops. A worker resisting temptation at one shop, fell a victim to the temptation by the time he came to the third or fourth shop. The foreign Government salved its conscience by earmarking the excise revenues for promotion of education in the State. But soon they had to give up this special earmarking because it was contended that this kind of earmarking was contrary to the correct mode of budgeting principles. And so this earmarking was dropped and the total excise revenue went into the general credit side.

Gandhiji's object in starting the Satyagraha—mass civil disobedience movement—was to embarrass the Government and to dislocate its normal functioning and to create an atmosphere of lawlessness and to make people lose their fear and respect for law and order. His object in selecting prohibition and repeal of salt tax was not only to create financial difficulties for the Government but also to bring into contempt and disrepute the Government by telling the people that the foreign Government existed because of its immoral methods of getting money by asking people to be drunkards and by telling the people, as



regards salt tax, that this anti-Indian Government taxed the poorest of the poor in this country.

How much Gandhiji's motive in wanting prohibition was based on political agitation and how much on moral grounds, it will be my effort to analyse.

In response to a letter from Sir Chunilal V. Mehta, Minister for Excise, I went and saw him in Poona some time in the middle of June 1921. He asked me to arrange for him a meeting with Gandhiji to discuss the latter's demand for immediate total prohibition. As he was rather nervous about Lloyd, the Governor, coming to know of this meeting and not liking it, Chunilal wanted the meeting to take place at his residence in Bombay—going to see Gandhiji at his residence in Laburnum Road would mean, he was afraid, undue publicity. Gandhiji readily agreed to meet Chunilal and was amused at Chunilal not wanting to come to see him at his house. Two or three hours before the meeting was to take place, Chunilal rang me up and said that he would not like Gandhiji to come to his place—once again the fear of Lloyd—and that the meeting should take place in my residence. So I had to rush up to Gandhiji's place and Gandhiji agreed.

The meeting took place at my residence in Chowpatty round about 11-30, and Umar Sobani, Shankerlal Banker, Jamnadas and I were present at the three and a half hours' discussion between Gandhiji and Chunilal. Chunilal made clear and definite suggestions for the eradication of the drink evil in Bombay. He could not promise immediate total prohibition. His scheme was that in a matter of 10 to 15 years, prohibition would come by gradual stages. This kind of reform, said Chunilal meant much more than passing of legislation, and the Government of Bombay was willing to undertake, step by step, reduction of the drink evil. This had better chances of success, if Gandhiji would co-operate. All of us were immensely impressed by Chunilal's sincerity and his will to achieve the desired result. But Gandhiji remained obstinate. He said that he was not interested in any reform step by step. He wanted it all at once. By 3 p.m. Gandhiji and Chunilal left. The rest of us were completely exhausted. The first comment came from Umar Sobani. Umar said: "Gandhi does not want Prohibition. He has in mind only the political aspect, viz., to embarrass and harass the Government

and bring it into disrepute for refusing to remove the drink evil". Umar Sobani and Shankerlal Banker were working with Gandhiji in the Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience Movements. We felt that Gandhiji had, by summarily rejecting Chunilal's offer, missed an excellent opportunity for achieving his object. Nothing then happened. Chunilal was naturally disappointed. Gandhiji's prohibition got into a blind alley.

But when the Congress Government took office in July, 1937 under the new Government of India Act of 1935, talk of prohibition became alive again, and Kher, the Chief Minister, K. M. Munshi, the Home Minister, and Morarji Desai, the Revenue Minister, were its prominent votaries. Partial prohibition was introduced by 1939 which affected the working classes in particular. For ten years, this partial prohibition was in force and my experience has been that it was a great success. The Maharashtrian woman never drinks. She abhors drink and the whole set of the working class in Bombay object to drink on religious grounds. The effect of this ten year partial prohibition was that there were less family brawls, peaceful atmosphere prevailed inside the chawls and on the roads, family life became steady and the standard of life of the workers improved. I am saying this most emphatically because there is hardly a working class tenement in the working class area which I have not visited, time and again. There was not much illegal distillation inside the working class area because the workers, men and women, and their families were happy that the temptation of drink—the tempting smell of the grog shop—was removed from round about their residence and place of work.

Then came the new Constitution of India which has one of its Articles as quoted above, including prohibition as its directive principle for the States. The States were free to introduce prohibition, partial or total, at their own sweet will, without any interference from the Union Government. And so, Bombay was the first to take the plunge whole hog on prohibition. Prime Minister Nehru, and C. D. Deshmukh, Finance Minister, did not want Bombay to go completely dry but there was nothing they could do to enforce their wishes on Kher and Morarji Desai. Prime Minister Nehru wrote privately to Bombay's Chief Minister, Kher, and advised him not to go in for total prohibition. Deshmukh went as far as to make public speeches against pro-

hibition, because of, among other things, loss of revenue. But Nehru's and Deshmukh's advice fell on deaf ears and the law of complete prohibition was passed.

The Chief Presidency Magistrate under instructions from the then Bombay Government, addressed a letter to the Hon. Presidency Magistrates asking for their reactions to the new law of total prohibition. The letter from the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, dated the 30th May/8th June, 1939, read as follows:—

"I am asked by Government to obtain your answers to the following questions and to convey your reply to Government forthwith.

1. Do you subscribe to Government's policy of prohibition?
2. Are you prepared to render such help as may be required in executing Government's programme?

Will you please send me your reply within a week as the matter is very urgent?"

I replied on the 14th June, 1949, and I reproduce extracts from my letter:

"I am afraid my reply to your D. O. 142 of 8th June would have to be rather long. To your first question whether I subscribe to the Government's policy of Prohibition, I have to say that I have never taken a drop of liquor in my life, that I do not believe in drinking even in moderation and that I am one hundred per cent teetotaller. I do not like other people to drink even in moderation and I feel extremely uncomfortable and unhappy when I see how stupidly people behave when under the effects of over-drinking and I am conscious of the terrible misfortune that a stupid man brings to himself and his family by indulging in the vice of drunkenness.

"I have been in touch with labour during the last 32 years. I have seen the evil effects of drinking on the working classes. For the last 11 years prohibition has been in force in the working class area, all the toddy shops having been closed. Prohibition in the working class area has succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of Gandhiji and the worker has been able to improve his morale and his standard of living as a result of the temptation of drink having

been removed from his surroundings. With the housing conditions as they are and because of want of recreational facilities, the one and only chance of relaxation was in the evil smelling toddy shops. I am, therefore, strongly in favour of continuing the present prohibition policy, so far as the working classes are concerned.

"The question, however, of bringing in total prohibition by law throughout the City or State raises other issues than the ones connected merely with the evil of drinking. First, it is a question of loss of revenue; secondly we need any amount of finance to feed the nation-building activities. We want proper housing for the industrial workers. It is a matter of regret that Governments, Central and State, have not paid enough serious attention to this great problem to which I give first priority. Then we want more hospitals. We read of the terrible consequences of T.B. and the havoc caused by the spread of this foul disease and yet there is hardly any arrangement for hospital treatment for T.B. cases. Then we have to educate the illiterate masses and as the Chief Minister of Bombay pointed out only 3 or 4 days back, 85 per cent of the population in this State is illiterate. How will democracy in India work when with the adult franchise 85 per cent. of our electors, the masters of the country, are illiterate?

"It is all, therefore, a matter of priorities as to which reforms should be undertaken first and which should wait for better conditions and for better times. If we have better housing for the industrial workers and the masses, it automatically improves the health of the people. With hours of work going down and with better housing and better wages and with the State helping, there will be more facilities and opportunities for the education of the children of the working classes and in matter of ten to fifteen years illiteracy may well disappear from this State.

"I would be entering the field of controversy if I added in parenthesis, that from my personal knowledge of Indian agitation between 1917 and 1947 Gandhiji agitated for prohibition and for the removal of the salt tax not merely because of the evil effects of drinking or because he thought it hateful that the people's salt should be taxed, but that it was

more an anti-government political agitation to harass, embarrass and to bring to a standstill the foreign (British) Government. But for the purpose of this letter it is not necessary to dilate further on this controversial issue.

"I am a very close student of human nature and have 32 years of experience of public life. I claim to have visited more houses in Bombay than anybody else in the city. My own personal feeling is that much as I abhor and hate drinking, the policy of total prohibition enforced by law would not be successful. There is too much indiscipline and too much hooliganism and too much selfishness and greed in the country which will create terrible reaction, against prohibition and people will take to illicit distillation, etc. In these illegal acts, the young children will be compelled to join in as much as such illegal distillation will take place in the home and from the start of his life the young Indian will be brought up in an atmosphere of hypocrisy and illegal activities. Today black-market flourishes with or without Government connivance. Government have so many problems on their hands with which they have not been able to cope. I can go on giving further arguments against prohibition. I can equally easily give arguments for prohibition. But when all is said and done and taking every point of view into consideration and weighing it carefully, I regret I cannot honestly subscribe to Government's policy of total prohibition. It is no small consolation to realise that in this attitude, I am in good company in as much as the Government of India have, I understand, tendered strong advice to the Government of Bombay to go slow on their prohibition policy. Though I do not belong to the Congress Party, I am a friend of the Government and I think the need of the hour is that Government should be maintained and supported on a non-party basis.

"Coming to the second question whether I am prepared to render such help as may be required in executing Government policy, I have no hesitation in giving an unequivocal reply that I shall render any help as may be required in carrying out Government programme. I have always been opposed to the theory and practice of civil disobedience. I am afraid the present indiscipline and hooliganism we see

amongst refugees or workers or students are a direct result of the civil disobedience movement of Gandhiji during the last 30 years. The law must be obeyed and it is the duty of every loyal citizen to obey the law and I shall, therefore, do my best to help the Government in their programme.

"I have written to you freely and frankly and I have no fear of being misunderstood either by the Government or by you, because you personally know me for several years and we have worked together in the Children's Aid Society, etc."

Sixteen years have elapsed since the writing of this letter and the experience gained in the working of prohibition has confirmed my fears as expressed in this letter. Illicit distillation has grown terrible. Equally bad is the police corruption. Government have not been able to cope with the drink evil. And the reputation of Government has suffered because of the flagrant violation of law and the inability of the police to cope with it, first because illicit distillation has become a cottage industry on a massive scale, and the temptation to the police to receive illegal gratification, from the boot-leggers is too much to resist.

The working classes so far as prohibition was partial did not take so much to illicit distillation and there was no direct incentive to drink. But since total prohibition has come in, there has been a large increase in illegal distillation even in the working classes. The reason is not so much the desire to drink as the profit motive, easy money gained through illicit liquor.

The question then is what is to be done? Why do Government cling to prohibition? The answer is easy to give. Loss of prestige by amending the law of prohibition and the fear that the Congress Government has given up and gone back on Gandhiji's great ideal of prohibition. I contend that there would be no loss of prestige. On the contrary, Government will gain strength by showing that they have the courage to reverse their policy when they have found out that that policy has not succeeded and cannot succeed under the circumstances in which we are living.

Secondly, as regards "stabbing" Gandhiji in the back, that too is not correct. Have not Government forsaken Gandhiji on equally important issues? Birth control, industrialisation and

heavy industries and hospitals?

The Government of India have openly and bravely encouraged and supported as their all India policy artificial birth control and family planning. Gandhiji was for celibacy and self-control.

Gandhiji saw the devil in the machine. While laying the foundation of the Bhakra Dam some years ago, Prime Minister Nehru said that the only time when he felt religious was when he saw heavy machinery working.

Within a month of his taking over the Chief Ministership of U.P., Mr. C. B. Gupta said that the prohibition policy of Government has failed. So also the P.S.P. Minister in the Kerala Cabinet said that the time has come to scrap the prohibition policy.

What then should be done? I ask again, and I shall give the answer. Scrap the present law of total prohibition and replace it by the previous law of partial prohibition with such modification as is necessary. These modifications would be based on the experience gained by the working of prohibition. Corruption would be minimised and more money will be available for the Third and Fourth Five Year Plans.

## CHAPTER XV

### MOPLAH RIOTS:

- **ALI BROTHERS' PROSECUTION: BOYCOTT OF PRINCE OF WALES & READING'S OFFER OF ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE REJECTED BY GANDHIJI; JINNAH'S GREAT EFFORTS: CHAURI CHAURA, GANDHIJI SUSPENDS HIS MOVEMENT; GANDHIJI ARRESTED.**

SOUTH India, particularly Malabar, paid a heavy price for the Khilafat and N. C. O. movements. In August, 1921, broke out the Moplah Rebellion—the revolt of an ignorant and fanatical people undoubtedly engineered by the preachings of Hindu and Muslim agitators, a revolt which soon turned against the Hindu community and resulted in the sacking of Hindu temples, the forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam and the death of many innocent persons. It was this tragic outbreak that did more than anything to wreck the façade of Hindu-Muslim Unity which Gandhiji's adoption of the Muslim cause had for the time created.

About the middle of August the situation in Malabar became distinctly serious. Additional troops were moved to Calicut. The rebels were indulging in wholesale murder, arson and forcible conversion of Hindus. A modified form of martial law was introduced which remained in force for about six months; so grave was the situation. By the middle of October reinforcements, totalling four battalions, one pack battery, a section of armoured cars and the necessary ancillary services had arrived. A severer form of martial law had to be introduced. The task of controlling the situation was difficult because the rebels adopted guerilla warfare and took to the hills. By the end of the year, the situation was well in hand and by 25th February, 1922, Martial Law was withdrawn. An idea of the fierceness of the campaign can be gauged by the heavy casualties—43



killed and 126 wounded among the troops and over 3,000 killed among the Moplahs. The atrocities perpetrated by the Moplah rebels were horrible and unmentionable. Sir Sankaran Nair, President of the Indian National Congress in 1895 and an ex-Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, in "Gandhi and Anarchy" says:

"Thousands of Mahomedans killed and wounded by troops, thousands of Hindus butchered, women subjected to shameful indignities, thousands forcibly converted, persons flayed alive, entire families burnt alive, women in hundred throwing themselves into wells to avoid dishonour, violence and terrorism, threatening death standing in the way of reversion of their own religion. This is what Malabar in particular owes to the Khilafat agitation, to Gandhi and his Hindu friends. The President of the Indian Moslem League, following the Ali injunction, justified the Mohamedan atrocities as an act of war against the Hindus and the Government."

Mrs. Besant toured round the riot-affected area and the refugee camps. She said in "New India" of November 29, 1921:

"It would be well if Mr. Gandhi could be taken into Malabar to see with his own eyes the ghastly horrors which have been created by the preaching of himself and his "loved brothers", Mohamed and Shoukat Ali. The Khilafat Raj is established there; on August 1, 1921, sharp to the date first announced by Mr. Gandhi for the beginning of Swaraj and the vanishing of the British rule, a police Inspector was surrounded by Moplahs, revolting against that rule. From that date onwards, thousands of the forbidden war-knives were secretly made and hidden away, and on August 20, the rebellion broke out. Khilafat flags were hoisted on Police stations and Government Offices.

"Our correspondent has sent accounts of the public functions connected with my hurried visit to Calicut and Palghat, and that which I wish to put on record here is the ghastly misery which prevails, the heart-breaking wretchedness which has been caused by the Moplah outbreak, directly due to the violent and unscrupulous attacks on the Government made by the Non-Co-operators and the Khilafatists and the statements scattered broadcast, predicting the speedy

disappearance of British rule, and the establishment of Indian rule, and the establishment of Swaraj, as proclaimed by the N. C. O. and Khilafat Raj as understood by the Moplahs from the declaration of the Khilafatists. On that there is no doubt whatever, so far as Malabar is concerned. The message of the Khilafatist, of England as the enemy of Islam, of her coming downfall, and the triumph of the Muslims had spread to every Moplah home. The harangues in the Mosques spread it everywhere and Muslim hearts were glad. They saw the N. C. O. preachers appealing for help to their religious leaders, naturally identified the two. The Government was Satanic, and Eblis, to the good Muslim, is to be fought to the death. Mr. Gandhi may talk as he pleases about N. C. O. accepting no responsibility. It is not what they accept; it is what facts demonstrate. He accepted responsibility for the trifling bloodshed of Bombay. The slaughter in Malabar cries out his responsibility. N. C. O. is dead in Malabar, but bitter hatred has arisen there as fighting men from dragon's teeth of Theseus. That is the ghastly result of the preaching of Gandhism, of N. C. O., of Khilafatism. Every one speaks of the Khilafat Raj and the one hope of the masses is in its crushing by the strong arm of the Government. Mr. Gandhi asks the Moderates to compel the Government to suspend hostilities, i.e., to let loose the wolves to destroy what lives are left. The sympathy of the Moderates is not, I make bold to say, with the murderers, the looters, the ravishers, who have put into practice the teachings of paralysing the Government of the N. C. O.s who have made 'war on the Government' in their own way. How does Mr. Gandhi like the Moplah spirit, as shown by one of the prisoners in the Hospital, who was dying from the results of asphyxiation? He asked the surgeon, if he was going to die, and surgeon answered that he feared he would not recover. "Well, I am glad I killed fourteen infidels" said the Brave—God-fearing Moplah, whom Mr. Gandhi so much admires, who 'are fighting for what they consider as religion, and in a manner they consider as religious'. Men who consider it 'religious' to murder, rape, loot, to kill women and little children, cutting down whole families, have to be put under restraint

in any civilised society.

"Let me finish with a beautiful story told to me. Two Pulayas, the lowest of the sub-merged classes, were captured with others, and given the choice between Islam and Death. These, the outcaste of Hinduism, the untouchables, so loved the Hinduism which had been so unkind and step-motherly to them, that they chose to die Hindus rather than to live Muslim".

The Ali Brothers realised that their apology in June brought their prestige down in the country. To make up for this loss of prestige, and to regain their position in India, particularly in the Muslim community, they threw prudence to the winds. At the Khilafat Conference in Karachi in July, they made violent speeches, exceeding all their previous efforts. They tried once again to force Gandhiji's hands, committing themselves to the position that the programme sanctioned by the Nagpur Congress was a dead letter, and that if no settlement of the Khilafat question was reached by Christmas, the projected National Congress at Ahmedabad would proceed to declare an Indian Republic. Further, to their own undoing, they called upon Muhamedan soldiers in the Army to desert, alleging that military service under the present Government was religiously unlawful. The Ali Brothers were prosecuted under the ordinary law and were convicted. Gandhiji was apparently perturbed by these demonstrations of violence. He was not blind to the possible results of such violence. A few weeks earlier, after the memorable tour of the Khilafat Mission through the Punjab, Sind and Madras, he wrote: "Our popular demonstrations are unquestionably mob demonstrations..... All the same there is mobocracy. You are at the mercy of the mob. So long as there is sympathy between you and the mob, everything goes well. Immediately, the cord is broken, there is horror".

At the All India Congress Committee meeting held in Bombay in August, Gandhiji opposed the efforts of the more irresponsible spirits. All talk of independence or of a Republic was quietly relegated to the background, and after some lively scenes, it was agreed that attention should be concentrated upon the boycott of foreign cloth and the promotion of hand-spinning and weaving; upon the temperance campaign and upon the promulgation of the doctrine of non-violence! The Committee re-

commended the postponement of civil disobedience until the cloth boycott had been achieved. The Committee, as a face-saving device, under inspiration and direction of Gandhiji, decided to boycott the Prince of Wales during his visit to India.

In November, Mrs. Besant wrote to me two letters which I shall quote in full:

On 11th:

"Please do not feel the least worried because, in the pressure we have all been under, you could not make up the Rs. 6,000 this year. No one could have worked harder than you have done. Really, Arundale's collections relieved me of the S. P. N. E. burden. If I had had the Rs. 80,000 due to me, and that I trusted to for the repayment of Mr. Dinshaw it would have been all right, but the money is still in the High Court, and seems to get no further. Dinshaw would not take the money except in one complete sum, and the consequence was that I had to pay nearly a quarter's additional interest, while over Rs. 70,000 were kept lying idle in my bank for five months, he sending the cheques back. I thought his proceedings very peculiar. I have had a terribly bad year, with one thing and another, and more than all I earned in England went in paying interest on loans!

"I am so glad to have your letter, as I miss it when you do not write.

"It is bad to hear that the people are very angry but that was the result I expected when the hopes excited by Gandhi were found to be illusory. I think the Government was right in prosecuting the Ali Brothers, but the case was very badly managed. The most serious charge was not made before the Magistrate, was smuggled in later (illegally) and not supported by evidence, though there was plenty. The finally withdrawn charges under 124 A and 153 B should never have been put in. When I read the matter, I urged Sapru to have them withdrawn, but it was too late.

"I do hope the Prince will not be insulted. It would have a very bad effect every where.

"You say civil disobedience will not begin until after December, but civil disobedience is intended to make Swaraj possible by that date".

On November 19th :

"I think the prosecution of the Ali Brothers was right, but it was badly mismanaged. There was the full proof available of the actually seducing of soldiers, and it was not brought at all before the Magistrate and before the Commissioner. No proof was given.

"The anger of the people is sure to rise as they see that they are no nearer to Swaraj than before. I have always anticipated sporadic riotings when failure becomes patent. Gandhi's hartal of the 17th naturally caused rioting. He may not have intended it in his blind belief in his own influence over his mobs. That should now be shaken.

"I have not noticed the change in the attitude of the *Social Reformer*, as I rarely see it. The last I saw was when it accused me of reaching the limits of journalistic indecency by mentioning Gandhi's idea of committing suicide. It came from a Lucknow paper, and was likely enough, as he threatened it in the mill strike at Ahmedabad, and it is quite proper for a saint."

"You really will deserve your holiday—when you get it."

"I go to Malabar next Tuesday, and leave for Bombay by Madras Mail of 29th".

Gandhiji's non-co-operation was not making any head-way. His agitation for boycott of satanic schools and colleges, after the first flush of temporary success, had recoiled against him. The hooliganism practised by his followers at public meetings of other political parties and public leaders and the breaking up of these meetings had equally strongly reacted against Gandhiji and his "non-violent non-co-operation". His betrayal of his colleagues, the Ali Brothers, after his six meetings with the Viceroy in Simla in May had infuriated not only Gandhiji's powerful colleagues and friends like Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das but also created revulsion against Gandhiji among the general public. The violent speeches at the Khilafat Conference at Karachi in July made serious minded people to have second thoughts on the so-called non-violent movement of Gandhiji. On top of it, Gandhiji postponed his civil disobedience movement and substituted instead the innocuous non-political hand-spinning and boycott of foreign cloth as the principal planks of his wonderful

non-co-operation movement. The Congress leaders and people realised that Gandhiji's new methods of non-violent non-co-operation were ridiculous and turned the whole movement into a farce. Gandhiji saw no light ahead of him. Confidence in Gandhiji's leadership was shaken. There was nothing substantial which he could do to keep his non-co-operation alive. Slowly but surely, he was drifting away into a non-political life. He had promised Swaraj originally by 30th September; then by 31st December and this Swaraj was to come through civil disobedience and as I wrote to Mrs. Besant early in November, Gandhiji would not think of civil disobedience till after the new year. But then the Government came to his rescue and helped him to stage a come-back.

On April 26, 1919, William Vincent, Home Member, had written:

"I think that a good many people will soon be tired of Mr. Gandhi and his vagaries". Bombay Governor, Lloyd, agreed with Vincent. Lloyd wrote to the Viceroy a few weeks later in June: "Gandhi's meetings are not well attended and his followers are very disgruntled. The mere deportation of Gandhi will raise a considerable storm whilst his prosecution is a course that I cannot contemplate with any degree of satisfaction. If it were not for Gandhi, all could be extremely well here..... but he is a real danger point. Unless he forces our hands, he is less dangerous loose than bound, for he loses influence daily but his knowledge of that fact impels him to desperate courses to recover his influence".

Vincent discussed on October 10, 1921, the pros and cons for Gandhi's prosecution for signing the manifesto (declaring that 'it was contrary to national dignity for any Indian to serve as a civilian, and more especially as a soldier')."

Among reasons for prosecution, Vincent mentioned:

"The serious effect which our inaction in face of avowed seditious speeches is having on the administration, etc., the disheartening effect on moderate opinion. A prosecution seems inevitable sooner or later, and the fact that Gandhi may at any time force Government to prosecute when the Prince of Wales is in India at which time a prosecution might be more troublesome than now."

Among reasons against prosecution, Vincent stated:

"Gandhi is pledged to secure Swaraj by the end of December and his failure to do so may lead him to give up the movement and will certainly and naturally discredit him. He is losing a number of educated supporters who are opposed to his present activities. The danger at this juncture of imprisoning Gandhi would be to increase his influence very greatly. He is now not only regarded as a great national hero, but by the ignorant, as semi-divine. His confinement in jail would draw many adherents to his cause, and it is probable that he knows this. He certainly wants to be made a martyr in order to secure support for his movement, thus consolidating it at a time when many of his schemes have failed. He is equally certainly not challenging us to prosecute him for the benefit of the Government but because he believes that he will secure some advantage therefrom. The result of prosecution would be a great increase in unrest and probably disaster just on the eve of the Prince of Wales visit. If Government does not prosecute Gandhi at this time it must expect hartals and abstentions from ceremonies (in connection with the Prince of Wales' visit). If on the other hand Government prosecutes it would certainly encourage open demonstrations against the Prince of Wales, and may be faced with such wide disorder as to make it necessary to postpone the visit. It is not known how far any modification of the Turkish peace terms is possible, but if we could secure some substantial modification in favour of Turkey we should go a long way to break Mr. Gandhi's movement so far as Muhammadans are concerned. On the whole, I am inclined to the view that we would be well advised to postpone action for the present at any rate.... . If necessary we could prosecute later, say in December or January, by which time Gandhi will probably put himself more in the wrong or abandon the movement..... I am well aware of the dangers of this course, and am really mainly influenced by the fact of the Prince of Wales' approaching visit. If this is postponed, I should, I think, advocate prosecution immediately and risk the other dangers".

The Government blundered. Prestige stood in the way of their deciding to put off the Prince's visit to India, planned long

before Reading's arrival in India. Many Provincial Governments, particularly Bombay (Lloyd and Setalvad) advised strongly against the Prince coming to India in these disturbed conditions. But the British Government and Reading were afraid that the postponement of the visit would have the disadvantage of attributing power to the non-co-operation movement, and above all of creating both in England and in the Dominions, and throughout the world, the impression that India was so disloyal that it was not safe for the Prince to visit it.

And so, the Prince came to India and gave Gandhiji an opportunity to insult him and through him, the British Government. Government were naturally anxious that the Prince should be given a royal welcome and should not be insulted. They suggested that no politics were involved in this visit. Gandhiji and the Congress decided to boycott the visit of the Prince and as a mark of protest against his coming, Gandhiji arranged a big bonfire of foreign cloth in Parel on the very morning of the Prince's arrival at the Apollo Bunder on 17th November. Gandhiji was advised against creating disturbances against the Prince and among those who asked him at the instance of the Viceroy, not to involve the Royal Prince in political agitation in India, were the late Maharaja of Gwalior and F. E. Dinshaw.

Immediately after the bonfire was over in Parel, people attending the meeting lost complete hold on themselves and took to violence and rioting. This had terrible repercussions both in India and England. For four days, the riots continued. When I saw Gandhiji next morning, he was lying on a mat, heart broken and weeping like a baby. "I am a bankrupt, I am a bankrupt", he was screaming. "I asked people to be non-violent and they have taken to stone-throwing and as they throw stones, they keep shouting "Mahatma Gandhi-ki-Jai". He wrote four articles in the "Chronicle", first entitled "I am a bankrupt" and the fourth "An Appeal to the Mawalis (Hooligans of Bombay)". This implied that Gandhiji realised and knew that the riots were fomented by his own people—his educated followers and not just by the riff-raffs and bad characters of Bombay. He said: "Whether you call yourself a Hindu, Mussalman, Parsi, Christian or Jew, you have certainly failed to consider even your own religious interests. You have used the mass awakening for your own lust for plunder, rapine and even indulging in your worst



animal appetite. Some of my friends would, I know, accuse me of ignorance of human nature. If I believe the charge, I would plead guilty and retire from human assemblies and return only after acquiring knowledge of human nature."

In an earlier article he said: "With non-violence on our lips, we have terrorised those who happened to differ from us. The 'Swaraj' that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils. I am more instrumental than any other in bringing into being a spirit of revolt. I find myself not fully capable of controlling and disciplining that spirit".

Lord Reading who had come to Bombay to receive the Prince was terribly upset. Sir Chimanlal Setalved says in his "Recollections and Reflections": "That evening I was at Government House and Sir George Lloyd told me how a little while ago, Lord Reading was sitting in the Chair that I was occupying, with his head in both his hands, and how he broke down at what had happened. One can well understand the feelings of Lord Reading, if it was true as was said at the time, that he had advocated the coming of the Prince of Wales to India at this juncture in opposition to the contrary opinion of several provincial Governors". However, those unfortunate incidents in Bombay, did not deter Gandhi from continuing the boycott of the Prince in all the Cities that the Prince visited, and there was trouble, among other places, in Allahabad and Calcutta, and both Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das were locked up by the Governors of U. P. and Bengal, Sir Harcourt Butler, and Lord Ronaldsney (afterwards Lord Zetland). The Prince was enthusiastic about his visit during his first two days in Bombay. But seeing how unfriendly and angry his reception was, he lost all interest in his Indian tour. When I shook hands with him at the Government House as a Member of the Bombay Legislative Council, on the third day, I found him absent-minded and shaking hands mechanically with the members.

Gandhiji attempted to stop the disturbances by his pathetic appeals to his followers. He stated that the outbreak of mob violence had convinced him that his hopes of reviving mass civil disobedience were illusory. The riots in Bombay gave Gandhiji such a shock that he suspended his intention of starting civil disobedience on the 23rd at Bardoli

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Reading's Law Member, told me

later that Reading felt bitter and depressed at the failure of the Prince's visit and had a nervous breakdown. Reading wanted that some how or other the Prince should not return to England disappointed and unhappy and he wanted Gandhiji not to insult him any further with his boycott movement. Reading, therefore, welcomed a suggestion for a re-approachment with Gandhiji the first condition being that Gandhiji should give up his plan for the boycott of the Prince in Calcutta. Reading was willing to pay good price for this friendly gesture from Gandhiji. Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru and my brother, Jamnadas, were sent by Reading, Sapru, Mrs. Besant and Malwiya, to Gandhiji at Sabarmati Ashram, Ahmedabad, on 18th December, 1921, with the offer from Reading and Sapru that Lord Reading would call a Round Table Conference in Calcutta a week prior to the Prince's visit there, himself representing the British Government, and India to be represented by the political leaders, including Gandhiji and his Congress friends. Reading promised that at this Conference, he would, on behalf of the British Government, concede full Provincial Autonomy and discussions would take place as to what power should be transferred from the Central Government to the Indian people's representatives i.e. dyarchy in the Central Government. Ronaldshay in his speech to the Bengal Legislative Council referred to this offer from Reading. He contacted C. R. Das in the Alipore Jail. He gave facilities to Das to send from the jail clear-the-line messages to Gandhiji, urging him to accept Lord Reading's offer. At the suggestion of Setalvad, I went to Ahmedabad and met Jamnadas and Kunzru at the Ahmedabad Railway Station in the morning after they had their talk with Gandhiji one hour before their train left for Cawnpore. I got the full story of Reading's offer and I was told that Gandhiji had accepted it and soon the country would be blessed with political peace and happiness. Anusuyaben met me at the station and took me to the Sabarmati Ashram. I met Gandhiji and then went for my bath. An inmate at the Ashram whispered to me that I should wash my clothes and dry them myself, otherwise Gandhiji would wash them and I would feel extremely awkward and embarrassed. The lunch was served by Gandhiji himself and as I finished it, I followed others in washing and cleaning my own plate. Gandhiji spoke to me gently: "I am sure you are not accustomed to washing and

cleaning your utensils. Leave your plates as they are: I shall wash them". Of course, I did not let him do so. One of my happiest recollections of life is the kindness and affection that Kasturba always poured on me whenever I met her. I remember how kind she was on that day in December.

To come back to the political story: after lunch I found Gandhiji talking to half a dozen Moulvis and Vallabhbhai Patel. They did not like the idea of Gandhiji accepting Reading's offer and going to the Round Table Conference unless Reading agreed to release the Ali Brothers and others convicted of violent activities. Within one hour, Gandhiji wired to Sapru and Reading that after serious thought, he had decided to reject Reading's offer and the acceptance he had sent through Jamnadas and Kunzru was to be cancelled. I did not know of this telegram rejecting the offer till I met Mrs. Besant in Benares four or five days later.

Before I left the Ashram in the evening with Anasuyaben and Shankerlal, I had a non-political talk with Gandhiji. I told him of the glare of the sun getting into his room and commented on the absence of trees and flowers in the compound and sunshade in the huts. Gandhiji's reply was "trees and flowers are not necessary". I further commented on the absence of privacy and quiet when he was having talks with his friends in his room. This meant waste of time and energy owing to interruptions and disturbances from other quarters!

Poet Rabindranath Tagore said later: "What a wilderness of white colour is the Sabarmati Ashram. Mark you, before long it will develop into a political cult as intolerant and tyrannical as the civilization of the sandy deserts of Arabia. The white colour is a colour of intolerance. Gandhi has adopted it; it will have its consequences".

The Congress Session was due in Ahmedabad next week. C. R. Das, the elected President, could not attend as he was in jail. Gandhiji's earlier intentions were to get resolutions passed for the launching of civil disobedience. But Gandhiji did nothing of the kind. I was given a copy of the main resolution drafted by Gandhiji himself. The resolution gave Gandhiji full and complete dictatorship over the Congress!

I returned to Bombay next morning and had a long discussion with Sir Chimanlal Setalvad. He asked me to see him

that evening at 10 at his bungalow as he wanted me to send a telegram to Mrs. Besant. The 100-word telegram which I sent from the Central Telegraph Office over my signature at 12 midnight was dictated word by word by Setalvad. This telegram said that Gandhiji would not be permitted by his followers to come to a political settlement with the British Government. The telegram further stated that Gandhiji would go back on his word and would not go to the Round Table Conference. This telegram had to be sent in my name as Setalvad was a Member of the Executive Council of the Government of Bombay.

I had decided not to go to Benares for the Theosophical Convention as I had too much work in Bombay to do that week and the next week. I was a member of two important Committees—one was the Industrial Disputes Committee and the other the Prostitution Enquiry Committee. Both these Committees were appointed by Government on my resolutions on the subjects passed in the Bombay Legislative Council in July and September, 1921. Even though I was a member myself of the Prostitution Enquiry Committee, the Committee had asked me to give evidence before it on 3rd January and I had to prepare my evidence. But, feeling uncomfortable at the strong language I had used in 'my' telegram to Mrs. Besant—not the kind of language which a political follower would usually use in communicating with his leader—I decided to leave for Benares immediately.

On the 21st December, I went to Benares where the Theosophical Convention was being held. Mrs. Besant was anxiously waiting for me at Shanti Kunj. I apologised to her for the strong language of my telegram. She smiled and said there was no reason for my apologising as she clearly understood that the telegram was drafted by Setalvad, and she added: "What Setalvad and you had feared, has come true—Gandhi has gone back on his word; he has bungled and lost a great opportunity". It is very very strange that this story of the offer and rejection got no publicity at that time. Some bits of the whole story appeared in the correspondence of C. R. Das some years later after he died in June, 1925. "C. R. Das was beside himself with anger" says Subhas Chandra Bose in "The Indian Struggle". "The chance of a life-time had been lost" he said.

From Benares, I accompanied Mrs. Besant to Allahabad to

attend the annual Liberal Federation. We stayed as Sapru's guests. On 1st January, at the morning coffee, half an hour before I was leaving for Bombay, Mrs. Besant asked me how soon Gandhiji would begin his civil disobedience movement. I replied promptly: "Gandhiji will not begin his civil disobedience movement. I have already seen indications of hesitation and he is waiting for an opportunity to call it off". I did not then realise how just after a month I would prove to be right.

On 2nd January, 1922, late in the evening, I saw Jinnah and with him were Ruttie and Bhurgri of Karachi. We talked for seven hours, right till 4 a.m. Jinnah was anxious to know Mrs. Besant's and Sapru's reactions to Gandhiji's refusal to join the Round Table Conference. Jinnah told me that he, Ambalal Sarabhai, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Jayakar, Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Natarajan and Bhurgri were convening a Conference in Bombay where Gandhiji would be invited, the object being to ask Reading to renew his offer of the Round Table Conference and to give Gandhiji an opportunity to repair his mistake. Jinnah asked for my assistance and he invited me to join the preliminary meetings at Ambalal Sarabhai's house to make arrangements for the Conference. He asked me to request Mrs. Besant to attend the Conference. He and I immediately contacted Mrs. Besant by telegram, but she thought it useless to come down to Bombay as she said Gandhiji would not co-operate. And this is what happened. Gandhiji was negative, obstructive and unhelpful and Sir Sankaran Nair, who presided at the Conference, therefore, walked out in disgust. The conference thus was really a failure, thanks to Gandhiji. But the Viceroy refused the request to repeat his offer because the psychological moment for such a conference had been lost. The Prince of Wales was boycotted in Calcutta and Reading was disappointed. Jinnah was dejected and realised that both sides—Government and Gandhiji—were unhelpful and obstructive. He made a strong but vain attempt to start a new party but Jayakar and Natarajan refused to help and Jinnah, therefore, quietly went back to his big practice in the High Court and bided his time.

The main resolution at this Conference supported the proposal for a Round Table Conference of Government and popular representatives and recommended that in order to provide a favourable atmosphere for the dispassionate consideration of

the points of controversy, all repressive measures should be suspended and further, that pending the results of the said Conference, all hartals, picketings and civil disobedience should cease. Immediately, after the close of the Conference, Jinnah and Jayakar as secretaries of the Conference put themselves in communication with the Viceroy.

While this was going on, Gandhiji sent from Bardoli on February 1, 1922, an ultimatum to the Viceroy telling him that only if the Viceroy complied with the demands made by him within seven days, he would advise postponement of civil disobedience of an aggressive character and released the letter to the Press! Gandhiji thus queered the pitch. On the publication of Gandhiji's letter, Jinnah and Jayakar issued a statement regretting that Gandhiji should have taken this step when consultations were still going on between them and the Viceroy on the question of the Round Table Conference. Mrs. Besant wrote an important letter to me on 5th February:

"I have put the *Times* article in New India.

"I have no doubt as to the leanings of Lord Reading and Sapru but others have also to be consulted, and the feeble attitude of the Moderates with regard to facing the revolution is not encouraging to a Viceroy. They are either blind, or timid, and he cannot rely on them for steady and vigorous support.

"I think you are rather unjust to Sapru. He is doing all he can, and was more distressed than anyone else when the Viceroy's offer was rejected by Gandhi.

"That the many young men who provoke arrest are subjected to some hardship by their very numbers is likely, though most of their statements seem to be untrue. Provision is not made in a civilised country for crowds of students provoking arrest and inadequacy is inevitable. What is 'worse than this' is the state of Malabar, where Gandhi's followers established the Khilafat Raj and we shall have that in India if these young madmen have their way.

"Gandhi always flinches at the critical moment. His bold words are mere bluff. Civil disobedience was to begin on January 15, then January 31; now you say the 8th February; he says 11th. Perhaps it will be put off again. Gunthur has fortunately collapsed. Gandhi will be arrested, I

expect, at his first overt action.

With love and blessing”.

At Chauri Chaura in the United Provinces, a terrible outrage occurred on the 4th of February. Some twenty-one policemen and rural watchmen were murdered in the most deliberate manner by a mob of Congress ‘volunteers’ and infuriated peasantry. Both the brutality of this outrage and its unprovoked character combined to deal the final blow to Gandhiji’s hopes of immediate success. On the 7th February afternoon, Setalvad rang me up from the Secretariat and asked me to go and see him immediately. I was with him in ten minutes. He said that Gandhiji from Bardoli had written a private letter to Chhotani, the President of the Khilafat League, that he was calling off his Satyagraha movement because of the mob violence, burning policemen alive and burning police chowkis. This news was not yet given to the Press by Gandhiji. And thus what I told Mrs. Besant on 1st January came true. Leaving Setalvad, I went to the Telegraph Office and sent telegrams to Mrs. Besant in Madras and my brother, Jamnadas, in New Delhi, where the Legislative Assembly was in session. I told them in flowery language that Gandhiji was abandoning his movement. Sapru, Law Member, saw the telegram before it was delivered to Jamnadas and asked Jamnadas to tell me to be cautious and not send such open telegrams not based on facts. Sapru said that the Government of India had received no communication from the Government of Bombay on this subject and therefore my news could not be correct. It so happened that the Bombay Government waited for clarification and further confirmation of Gandhiji’s intention before communicating the news to the Central Government. So, I was first with the news. Mrs. Besant published the gist of my telegram in the next day’s *New India* as “from our Spl. Correspondent” and thus the news of Gandhiji’s calling off the movement appeared first in ‘*New India*’, Madras, long before any paper in India, including Bombay knew of and published the story. Mrs. Besant was pleased with me at this journalistic coup.

On February 25, Mrs. Besant wrote to me:

“Enclosed explains itself. So many thanks for your letters of the 10th, 11th and 14th. You saw Kelkar’s article in *Mahratta* and my leader on it? I had also your telegrams.

I am very thankful for your help of this sort. The letter of the 14th, especially was most welcome.

"The 'path of action' just now is as Shri Krishna says very 'tangled'! But the end is sure".

Immediately after I sent the telegrams, about Gandhiji's giving up the civil disobedience movement, I met Jinnah and Ruttie and discussed the new developments in Indian politics as a result of the collapse of Gandhiji's movement. At a meeting of the Working Committee on February 12, Gandhiji formally suspended mass civil disobedience forthwith and instructed his followers to abandon any preparation of an offensive character. The All India Congress Committee met at Delhi on February 24th and at Gandhiji's instance passed resolutions deploring the Chauri Chaura incident, and suspending mass civil disobedience. Gandhiji instead suggested that all members of the Congress should take to spinning!

C. R. Das was greatly upset by this decision.

Subhash Bose records: "Deshbandhu was beside himself with sorrow and anger at the way Mahatma was repeatedly bungling. The Bardoli retreat came as a staggering blow."

Mahadev Desai wrote from Agra jail that the shock of Gandhiji's action had absolutely unhinged him.

Lajpatrai addressed a letter to the Congress Working Committee saying that "the Congress had to swallow the bitter pill of ignominious defeat today."

In Lucknow Jail, the reactions of both Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru were equally violent. Motilal was beside himself with anger. Jawaharlal vented his despair in a letter to Gandhiji.

So, this was the position at the end of February. Gandhiji had given up all idea of civil disobedience and was asking the Congress instead to take to hand-spinning!! He had angered his closest friends and colleagues. They lost their confidence in him because for the second time in twelve months, he had let down his friends and colleagues behind their back and brought ridicule on the Congress it being forced to give up political work and turning itself into a hand-spinning organisation.

C. R. Das, speaking in Madras in June, 1923, said:

"I myself led people to prison. I started the movement in Bengal. I sent my son first to jail. My son was followed by my wife and then I went to prison, because I knew there



was electricity there. I knew that the spirit of resistance that manifested itself was mighty and the proudest Government did bend to it. You (Gandhi) bungled it and mis-managed it. Now you turn round and ask people to spin and do the work of Charkha alone. The proudest Government did bend to you. The terms came to me through Lord Ronaldshey, the Governor of Bengal, and I forwarded them to the Headquarters (Gandhi in Ahmedabad) because at that time I was in jail. If I had not been in jail, I would have forced the country to accept them. After they had been accepted, you would have seen a different state of things."

It needs to be emphasized that because of this bungling of Gandhiji, full provincial autonomy which was promised to us in January 1922, came to us fifteen years later in 1937, and for the responsibility in the Centre which was promised to us then, we had to wait for 25 years and that too came by way of division of the country (Aug. 1947).

Gandhiji's stock was low and outside the jail, there was nothing he could do. So, Government had to come to his rescue. Lloyd forgot what he had written in 1919 that Gandhiji inside the jail would be more dangerous than outside. All that he (Lloyd) in his anger and imperialistic fury saw was that Gandhiji was down and out and he wanted to crush him for ever. He decided to take action against Gandhiji. Lloyd boasted to me in June 1922 when I met him at the Government House, Ganeshkhind, Poona, that when Gandhiji asked him in April, 1919 to arrest him, Lloyd had replied to him that the latter would arrest Gandhiji not when it suited Gandhiji and Gandhiji was strong but only when it suited the Government when Gandhiji was weak. So, Gandhiji was arrested on 10th March, 1922. But, there is a story behind this arrest. Gandhiji was to have been arrested a few days earlier in Bardoli under Lloyd's orders and actually the Dy. Commissioner of Police, Bombay, had proceeded to Bardoli for this purpose. But, before this could be done, Reading telegraphed to Lloyd not to go ahead with his plan of arrest. Lloyd was furious at what he considered Reading's weakness and interference. That very afternoon, he took a special train to Delhi and offered his resignation as Governor unless he was allowed to carry out his deci-

sion of arresting Gandhiji. Reading gave way, Gandhiji was arrested and his trial took place in Ahmedabad on March 12. Shankerlal Banker, as Printer of *Nav Jivan*, was arrested along with Gandhiji. Gandhiji pleaded 'guilty' and accepted full responsibility for the occurrences in Bombay and Chauri Chaura. He ended by saying: "I knew I was playing with fire. I ran the risk, and if I were set free, I would still do the same". The Court sentenced him to six years imprisonment; Shankerlal only one.

To put Gandhiji in jail was a serious political blunder. From June, 1921 after Ali Brothers' apology, Gandhiji was losing ground. The Moplah atrocities further made people lose confidence in Gandhiji and his methods of non-violent non-co-operation. His refusal to go to the Round Table Conference offered by Lord Reading showed that he lacked political judgment and that he was more keen on trouble than on settlement between India and the United Kingdom. This view was further strengthened when he refused to take the second opportunity given to him by Jinnah, Malviya and Sankaran Nair at the Conference in Bombay. Chauri Chaura was the last straw. Gandhiji could no longer have kept his unique position as the only one All-India Leader. Gandhiji was discredited. What harm could Gandhiji have done as a free man? But the thirst and hunger of Imperialism, racial arrogance and Bureaucracy had to be quenched, irrespective of what harm it did to peace and reconciliation.

## CHAPTER XVI

### MY SOCIAL WORK: COMMERCIALISED VICE

It was my privilege to be the first member for Labour in the Legislative Council. There were no organised Trade Unions at that time and the Governor had powers to nominate one member to the Bombay Legislative Council to represent labour. This membership of the Council gave me excellent opportunities to serve the cause of labour in general and women workers in particular. Important aspects of this work, inside and outside the Legislature, included, *inter alia*, resolution in Council, demanding legislation to create machinery to settle industrial disputes, questions in regard to introducing legislation on maternity benefits, provision for creches inside the factories, starting maternity homes in the City including Development Department chawls, starting in co-operation with Sir Ness Wadia, the Nowroji Wadia Maternity Home, appointment of lady factory inspectors to look after the interests of women workers, welfare activities including medical relief and the problem of industrial housing.

I have always held that the boycott of the Legislatures which Gandhiji forced on this country by passing at the Special Session of the Indian National Congress at Calcutta in September, 1920, the resolution on non-co-operation was a great political blunder and so far as the working classes are concerned it prevented natural evolutionary growth of a healthy trade union movement and progressive labour legislation. The years 1921 to 1937, except for the period 1923 to 1928 when Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das started the Swaraj Party and gave up the boycott of legislatures, were dark years for India because of the frequent imprisonment of leaders. The Indian atmosphere was vitiated by negative activities of the Congress resulting in, time and again, lethargy, inaction, disappointment and despair. Too much stress was laid on purely negative political issues like hun-

ger strike, fast unto death, token strikes, hartals, bonfire of foreign cloth, boycott of educational institutes, schools and colleges. Constructive nation building activities like looking after the women and their children, birth control and helping the illiterate masses to get education were neglected by the Congress and its leaders. The scientific and industrial progress and research made in the West went over India's head because the leaders were far too pre-occupied with negative activities.

However, quite a few of us, alas, far too few, realised this great drawback on the part of Congress leaders including Gandhiji, and were not deterred from taking up the constructive side of India's national life and healthy nation building activities. It is amusing to find Congress leaders talking now of the same nation building activities as if they had made a new discovery. They forget that these activities were started by self-less non-Congress workers in the early twenties. But it is regretfully to be noted that more than 40 years have been lost. If these activities had been taken in hand in a country-wide and organised basis in the early twenties, India would have been a much happier place to live in and the understanding of the people and their standard of living would have improved. The impact of closer contact of the West including U.S.A. would have brought fresh air and happiness to the starving teeming millions of this country. Too much talk, too many slogans, too much make-believism were and are the order of the day. Make-believism has been brought to perfection as an art and is a new religion of the ruling party — a legacy of the twenties.

On 20th July, 1921, I moved a Resolution in the Bombay Legislative Council to consider and report on the practicability or otherwise of creating machinery for the prevention and early settlement of industrial disputes. The Council passed this Resolution and Government accepted it and promptly acted on it by appointing an Industrial Disputes Committee (Dec. 1921). Sir Stanley Reed, now a nonagenarian—then Editor of the Times of India — was its Chairman and I was one of its members. This Committee, consisted of millowners, Mr. Jehangir B. Petit, Mr. Mohammedbhoy Currimbhoy (afterward Sir Currimbhoy Ebrahim, Bart) and Sir Joseph Kay, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and the Indian Merchants Chamber, Mr. (afterward Sir) Henry McNaughten, Mr. Lalji Naranji, Mr.

G. K. Deodhar of the Servants of India Society, and two representatives of labour — Mr. S. K. Bole and myself. This Committee submitted a unanimous report in April, 1922, recommending legislation on conciliation, etc. On the lines of these recommendations, the Government of Bombay prepared a bill. Just as it was to be presented to the Bombay Legislative Council, the Government of India suddenly pounced on the Government of Bombay issuing instructions that the bill should not be proceeded with in the Bombay Legislative Council, giving as an excuse that the Government of India themselves were preparing an All-India legislation to create a machinery for the prevention of industrial disputes. The delay thus caused by the uncalled for interference of the Government of India was responsible for the continuous industrial disturbances in Bombay City and other parts of the Presidency. This was a case where the unanimous resolutions of employers and labour were flouted by the Government of India. The report gave valuable information in regard to the labour situation of these times.

My efforts at unionization of workers — white collar and manual and women workers—continued throughout as can be seen from my letter published in the "Times of India on 19th December, 1922:

"I gladly respond to the appeal made by a "Hallo Girl" to give my experiences with regard to the attention paid by the "girls" to the numerous subscribers of the Telephone Company, I must, at the outset protest against the unkind exaggerations and the bantering tone of Sir Frank Beaman's letter. Criticism of this nature from an ordinary man would pass unnoticed, but when the weight of Sir Frank Beaman's name is added to it, it is the duty of all fair-minded people to try to prevent injustice, unconscious no doubt, being done to the overworked, misunderstood but zealous set of public servants belonging to one of the most important and useful utility services. Sir Frank Beaman says that it takes him more than an hour to get a number after asking for it every three minutes. Now it does not require any imagination to realize that the girl would much rather have done with you by giving you the number you want the first time you ask for it; and let me assure Sir Frank Beaman that whenever I have asked for a number—distinctly spoken—I have never been kept waiting. If the girl says "engaged" I

promptly but very politely say, "Will you please give me the number as soon as it is free; don't let me ring for it again". "All right" she replies, and believe me, Sir, I invariably get the number without asking for it again. If people would only remember that they are speaking to respectable ladies—human beings as good as themselves—and not to mere machines, the results would be far more satisfactory. It is in the hands of the subscribers themselves to do away with most of the "annoyances" caused by the telephone service. Let them but speak distinctly, slowly in the ordinary tone—without shouting at the top of their voice—and above all *politely* and they will have no reason to complain that the girls are in-attentive

I must also protest against the rude and discourteous tone adopted by some people when—probably by their own specimens of the chosen language, it is the unfortunate lot of the telephone girls to listen to every day, how much more realistically could the defects of the Bombay Telephones be brought home to our minds than Sir Frank Beaman's flavoured rhetoric! The fault, Sir, I have no hesitation in asserting, is mostly on the side of those who use the telephones. The remedy is in the hands of these "Hallo Girls". They have but to organize themselves into a Union, keep a sharp look out and complain to their officers of the abusive language resorted to by subscribers and to insist among other things on considerations of ordinary humanity being extended to them."

It should be mentioned that the automatic telephone system had not yet arrived in Bombay and that therefore the "Hallo Girls" (Telephone Girls) were a useful institution serving the City. Sir Frank Beaman was one of the most distinguished and respected judges of the Bombay High Court of those times.

On April 12, 1921, I sent to the Secretary, Bombay Legislative Council a notice of my intention to move three Resolutions at the next Sessions. These resolutions pertained to:

- (1) Creation of machinery for prevention and settlement of labour disputes.
- (2) the problem of commercialised vice.
- (3) Creation of machinery for adult education.

I sent copies of these Resolutions to Mrs. Besant and she commented in her reply dated 6th May:

"The first resolution is very important—Arbitration

Board (we passed one at Calicut).

"No. 2 is important, but very thorny.

"No. 3 should be accompanied by the formation of an Adult Workers' Association".

I wanted to equip myself fully with the facts of the commercial vice prevailing in the City and the cruelties perpetrated in this nefarious trade, so that I could do full justice to the subject in my speech in the Bombay Legislative Council, I, therefore, approached the Police Commissioner to help me with his officers to visit the brothel areas. He readily agreed. For weeks and weeks, I, accompanied by two senior Police Officers, toured through the brothel area, from 10 p.m. till 4 a.m. "the hours of business" in the red-light district. Day after day I visited brothels from the highest to the lowest classes. I had friendly talks with the inmates and I was treated with utmost courtesy by them when they realised the serious humanitarian objects of my visit viz. to reduce the hardships, cruelties and inhumanities of the 'trade'. They, one and all, answered questions freely and behaved with perfect seriousness and dignity whilst talking to me.

In July, 1921, I asked a question in the Bombay Legislative Council suggesting the enactment of a Children's Act on the lines of the Madras Children's Act. (This legislation was for the protection of youthful offenders as well as children (boys and girls) offended against. This referred *inter alia* to children living in brothels.

The Home Member replied "A Bill has already been drafted on the lines of the Madras Children's Act and Government hope shortly to introduce it in the Legislative Council". This Bill 'already drafted' in July, 1921 was introduced in the Bombay Legislative Council in 1924 and passed later that year.

I made the following speech in the Council on 30th September, 1921, in moving my resolution :

Mr. President, I beg to move :

This Council recommends to the Governor-in-Council that in view of the vast and alarming extent of the evils of prostitution in Bombay and of the great menace and danger which the existence of a large number of brothel houses constitutes to public morals, health and decency, Government should at an early date introduce such legislation in this Council as would have the effect when passed of making brothel-keeping altoge-

ther illegal, and would make it a punishable offence for persons to live on the earnings gained by the prostitution of women and girls”.

At the outset, Sir, I must confess to a feeling of nervousness in touching upon this subject, nervousness not because of the false and unjustifiable shame which has been responsible for the evil to remain, and work underground and which, therefore, is responsible for the great extent of the misery that is its resultant; but the feeling of nervousness is due to the great extent of the evil and the difficulties of remedying it. It is called an ancient vice, and cynics laugh at the attempts made time after time by people to combat it. Here sentiment alone is of no help. It does not solve the difficulty. It is useful, Sir, in so far as it goads reason to take action. We can only take proper action after the most deliberate consideration. I am also conscious that this is not a matter which can be disposed of with the passing of a resolution or a Bill. This evil cannot be eradicated by a stroke of the pen. The task being so difficult, it cannot be handled all at once. I have, therefore, though it best not to touch the whole problem. I shall merely refer to two or three aspects of the whole problem which is very big indeed.

I must here mention that this resolution is brought not for the protection of society, which can very well take care of itself; it is brought in the interests of those unfortunate sisters of ours living in conditions which are described as worse than those of slaves. I will only touch upon two aspects of the problem, the brothel-keeping and the procuring. I believe I have the support of this House as I know I have the support of the citizens of Bombay outside this House, in bringing forward this resolution, and I trust that it will be accepted by the Government.

I realise, Sir, that this is a matter on which we have to proceed very very slowly. This is not the occasion when I need dilate on the moral aspect of the problem. I am sure I would deserve to be ejected from this House if I should venture to inflict a lecture on the moral aspect of the situation. Everybody here is convinced that the thing is wrong. At the same time everybody feels doubtful whether the thing can ever be done away with. Therefore it is that I wish to touch upon only a very few aspects of the problem.

“I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to



the Police Commissioner and his subordinates for making it possible for me to carry out my investigations, however amateurish they might be. These investigations have opened my eyes to the situation. I do not propose to describe them all, but I shall only lift a corner of the veil. For the conditions, Sir, are too horrible to describe. Prostitution has been going on from times immemorial. But the conditions in Bombay at present are very bad, so bad indeed that they cannot be tolerated for a day longer. The question, Sir, is primarily an economic one. Of that there is not the slightest doubt. On that point I do not say very much, because I am sure everybody in the House will accept that proposition.

I shall merely refer to the existence of brothels and the way in which they are worked. Does the House realise how the recruits for these brothels are made, how the recruiting is going on, and how the inmates of the brothels are treated? I shall describe some of the conditions that I saw during my investigations. In one brothel, Sir, which I visited, there were three beds in one room. The reply I received was that the worst that could be imagined was true. Business was going on on those three beds at one and the same time. Is the Council going to tolerate this state of affairs? I visited another brothel. I saw a little boy of 10 years who was there. The moment I and the Police Officials went there, all the inmates of the brothels and the little boy came out. We began questioning the keeper of the brothel. But, before she could give a reply, the little cunning boy began to give the replies. He knew everything, and he seemed to be proud that he knew everything. Can the condition of things be more serious than this?

Objections are raised that public opinion in this matter is not very well formed. Whose is the fault? It is the fault of the public itself, that keeps itself ignorant of the real conditions. But fortunately public is now forming itself and it is at one with my resolution. Then there is another objection that if the Government accept the resolution as it stands, powers of the Police would be increased and that there would be Police corruption. There is sure to be some difficulty, but because there is going to be some difficulty in the future, we should refuse to take action is not a point which I am willing to concede.

What right have we to say that we are more respectable

than the poor inmates of the brothels? They are no less respectable than we are. They have been there not because of their own free will, not because they want to enjoy the life there, but because they have been thrown into that life ever since their infancy. They have been there brought by people, or they have been seduced from the houses of their parents by people with evil designs. These people, this degraded class of people, use them for their own purposes, corrupt them, and when they get dissatisfied with them they put them in the trade and make money from the degradation of these women. The case of an independent prostitute is quite different. If she is not inclined to receive visitors, she can shut herself up in her room, and remain there as she likes. The case of a brothel woman is different. She has to pay a certain amount of money to her keeper, and she is bound, ill or well, to receive visitors, at least from 10 to 15 men and more per day, and there is no choice in the selection of men. The man may be full of disease, or a drunkard, and in a most horrible condition, but the poor girl has no choice of refusal. If she refuses, she will be taken to task by the man who is in possession of her physical body.

"I am not standing here alone by myself. I appear before this Council with the blessings of the Archbishop of Bombay, and the blessings of the Social Purity Committee on which there are people like Rev. Mr. Grey, Lady Freeland, and the blessings of many other important men like Sir Gokaldas Parekh, who has turned grey in the service of the Motherland. I stand not only on behalf of myself but on behalf of the citizens of Bombay, who have sent a strong memorial to His Excellency the Governor-in-Council not very long ago. That Memorial, Sir, distinctly asks Government to take the action that I have now suggested in my resolution. As a matter of fact, the terms of my resolution are based on the memorial sent to His Excellency the Governor-in-Council. I am sure the Government will take not only the proper action desired, but will handle the situation in the manner in which it is absolutely necessary it should be handled at once.

I have said that I will not say anything on the moral aspect. I may say something about the physical aspect. We know that disease is rampant in Bombay. The annual report of the hospital to treat venereal diseases shows that the disease has spread

too wide, and very few in Bombay know to what extent it has gone up. A greater responsibility lies on this Council. Are we not to protect the future generation that will now come up as free and responsible citizens of a great nation? Those citizens have to be protected. How can they be protected if the disease is allowed to go on undetected and untreated? For the past mistakes or negligence we are not responsible, and I do not want to blame either the Government or the people. Now is the time to take proper action and it will not be difficult for Government to accept the resolution, and I hope I shall receive the support of the majority of this House.

"I do not propose to deal with the problem from the military point of view. The military point of view is equally important, and I hope the Government will take action upon it, and also take that into consideration.

I may be told that my resolution is not practicable. It is absolutely practicable. The Rangoon Government have passed, so late as February last, some legislation on the subject, the objects of which I shall presently lay before you. The Statement of Objects and Reasons of that Act says: "The object of this Bill is four-fold. In the first place it is desired to make brothel-keeping, the deliberate letting of premises for use as brothels, and the detention of women in brothels against their will, illegal".

The Hon. Mr. M. H. W. Hayward:

"Sir, I rise to make an explanation on behalf of Government, namely, that Government have already decided to appoint an influential Committee to consider the whole matter and we are already in communication with the gentlemen we propose to appoint on that Committee. I will, therefore, suggest to the Hon. Mover of this resolution that in view of this, it would be as well for him to withdraw this Resolution."

Thereupon, I congratulated the Government on the action taken and asked for leave to withdraw the resolution. I resumed my seat and Hayward turned to me and asked me to be a member of this Committee which he was appointing.

The Committee was soon appointed with Sir Jamsetji Jeejeebhoy Bart., as the Chairman and the other members of the Committee were:

The Most Revd. Dr. A. Goodier, Archbishop of Bombay,  
Right Revd. Palmer, Bishop of Bombay,  
Dr. R. M. Grey,  
H. B. Clayton, I.C.S., Municipal Commissioner,  
Dr. Miss Watts,  
Faiz B. Tyebji,  
S. G. Velinkar,  
K. Natrajan, and  
Kanji Dwarkadas.

At the first preliminary meeting held on 25th November, 1921, Home Member Hayward said :

"In 1911 a meeting presided over by Sir Bhalchandra Krishna passed a resolution with regard to driving prostitutes from Girgaum. Mr. Edwards (Police Commissioner) pointed out the blame attaching to landlords and deprecated increasing the powers of the police and imitating Japan.

"In 1917 the case of Emperor versus Mirza Syed Khan revealed hideous facts and resulted in Bombay Act VI of 1920 which added section 125A to the Bombay City Police Act of 1902 and forbade detention in brothels. A bill now being drafted "Children's Welfare Bill" deals with children in brothels.

"The League of Nations in 1920 passed resolution on the traffic in women which in India is dealt with under the Penal Code and Foreigners Act.

"In March, 1921, the Municipality asked for the Falkland Road area to be cleared up. A strong Committee which reported on this request pointed out the limits within which brothels are now segregated and did not advise the proposed action under present conditions.

"In July, 1921, we passed the resolution moved by Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas. The Commissioner of Police reported on this.

"In July 1921, the Social Purity Committee made a memorial to Government recommending that the following should be made illegal :

- (1) brothel-keeping;
- (2) letting premises for prostitutes;
- (3) procuring women.

"Legislation may be ahead of public opinion to lead it—but not too far. The imperfections of human nature must be

recognised."

The Committee then drafted a comprehensive questionnaire. Some of the statements and the oral evidence need to be reported in brief:

Archbishop Goodier, one of the finest gentlemen—most knowledgeable and practical whom I ever met in my life and whose insight into human nature was thorough and deep, gave the Committee the benefit of his views. It was my proud privilege to have earned his friendship as also of Rev. R. M. Grey. Before I deal with Father Goodier's statement, I should like to record a private conversation with him in which he gave me most valuable advice. He said: "My young friend, I am happy you are interested in this most essential of humanitarian work. But be careful you do not get involved. I will explain to you what I mean by giving an example: One of my priests was keen on the subject of forced woman degradation and he gave a lecture to a mixed audience of men and women talking of the shameful hiring of women's bodies etc. etc. He presented the case so badly and so morbidly that half his male audience immediately after the lecture went straight to the brothels." I have never forgotten this advice so graciously given and I have kept it in mind throughout my life not only in dealing with social work but also in political work.

The salient points in Dr. Goodier's statement were:

"Enquiries show that there is a wide machinery at work to draw young women in. Hawkers go from house to house and when they see a desirable girl, sell cheap and return until they can induce her to accompany them to their shop where her downfall is accomplished if possible. In the mofussil there is an agency to catch likely girls and send them to Bombay brothels. Legislation might be devised to stop these methods of obtaining prostitutes for Bombay. This system of importation is growing. The state of the lowest grade of prostitutes is literal slavery. The girls are bought or captured. Sometimes, a mofussil man sells his daughter to clear a debt. Once in a brothel, such a girl is confined and not allowed even to visit a doctor unaccompanied. The girl is thrashed if she stays away too long. Half of the Bombay prostitutes are decoyed in these ways; a quarter are old hands imported from outside; an eighth are bought slaves. The estimate leaves only a eighth who come

in of their own accord.

We should legislate to attack the procurer or provider in all these sources of supply. Another point of attack is by rescue work. It is found in England that a return to freedom after apparent improvement means almost inevitably a return to prostitution. This seems due to the effect of the life on the will-power. It is also necessary to legislate against the illegal confinement of prostitutes. All prostitutes are wanderers. Few stop more than 12 months in the same house. The masters of houses like to provide change for their customers. There were very strong interests at stake in the continuance of brothels and also a feeling that people should be allowed to go their own way." Asked to state his views on state regulations, Dr. Goodier said that he rather opposed it personally as implying recognition of vice.

Rev. Grey said that the Bombay brothels stood for slavery and cruelty. They also created an artificial demand as accessibility increased temptation. Grey suggested:

- (1) Deal with the procurer and bully and cut off the supply;
- (2) Make brothels illegal, gradually by legislation on the lines of the English, Burma and Ceylon Acts;
- (3) Go in for rescue work. Probably denominational homes fostered enthusiasm best.

Though I was a member of the Committee, because of my investigations, I was asked by the Committee to give oral evidence on 3rd January, 1922. Answering the questionnaire serially I said:

"The demand for prostitution had increased because of increased cost of living preventing men bringing their families to Bombay and because of political unrest and propaganda to the exclusion of moral and religious work.

In the lowest type of brothel where the inmates belong to the untouchable Mahar and Dhed communities, a girl lives, cooks and plies her trade in one room which is extremely dirty and worse than the rooms inhabited by average millworkers. Sometimes there are more than two beds in the same small room and the "business" going on simultaneously without a screen in-between. The fee per visitor is from 4 annas. The woman has to make about Rs. 3/- per day which means that she has to accept over 10-12 visitors a day. The landlord's rent-

collector collects rent daily—about 10-12 annas per day, i.e., Rs. 20/- p.m. for a room for which normally the rent would be Rs. 3/- p.m. Thus the fee earned by the girl for three visitors goes to the landlord.

The European brothels charge fees from Rs. 30 to Rs. 50, seem to be good and clean, the Japanese moderately clean. The higher class Indian brothels charging Rs. 5/- are squalid. In the lowest class brothels the women are obviously in bad physical condition. Even obviously diseased men are not prevented from entering, and receiving as they do 10 or 12 men a day, the prostitutes are certain to contract disease. It is obvious that a girl receiving 10 to 12 visitors a day would soon contract a disease, and would go on spreading it to other customers.

In Bombay procurers seduce ignorant women like vegetable sellers. Common prostitutes are also recruited from respectable families through pimps and hawkers who are provided with funds by procurers. Some procurers introduce men to any one of a large circle of common prostitutes who are often married women carrying on prostitution in their own homes with or without their husbands' knowledge and pocket about half the fee. The brothel keeper contrives to show that the prostitute is in debt to him and the prostitute is unaware that the debt is irrecoverable at law. The brothel keepers are well off and to become one is often the highest ambition of the brothel inmate. The bars—known as the cages—are supposed to serve as much to protect the women from assault as to imprison them!

I found scores of boys and girls under ten inside the brothels. These boys run about the brothels all the time, serve tea, coffee, etc. and in one case as I was asking questions to a brothel keeper, the boy under ten took great pride in answering the questions, and letting me know that he understood the whole business and what was going on.

No precautions are taken against venereal disease and no treatment is provided. State regulation of brothels involves three main principles—

- (1) registration of brothels,
- (2) registration of prostitutes,
- (3) compulsory medical examinations.

I am opposed to State regulation because

- (1) it fails to reduce disease,

- (2) it connotes state sanction,
- (3) it gives a certificate of safety and removes a restraining influence.

Natarajan intervened and said that equal law for both sexes being necessary and compulsory inspection of male frequenters of brothels impossible, regulation is self-condemned. The age of consent should be raised from 12 to 15½.

Whipping should be a punishment for male pimps, other forms of punishment being futile.

Among other witnesses were representatives of the Salvation Army, Dr. Sandilands, Executive Health-Officer, Bombay Municipality, Cauty, Dy. Commissioner of Police, Col. Claridge, Provost Marshall of Bombay.

The Japanese Consul, Takeyama, explained the Japanese regulatory system.

The system of segregation is about 300 years old. According to the Home Minister's Orders of 1900, women wishing to prostitute must appear before the police, who try to persuade them to give up their intention. The woman must produce a birth certificate, no girl under 18 being allowed to prostitute. This has always been the rule. A girl cannot prostitute without consent of her parents or guardian. Girls leave school at about 18 and attain majority at 20. The usual marrying age is 20 to 22.

Japanese women usually become prostitutes in order to raise money for their relatives. They are paid a lump sum by brothel keepers on contracting themselves for say 3 or 5 years and received a stationary percentage of their earnings (about 10 per cent.) which goes to reduce the amount of the debt. They may at any time obtain release from the brothel on application to the police, but remain civilly liable for the unpaid balance of the debt. Prostitutes are mostly drawn now from the poor agriculturist class and regard their livelihood as a thing disgraceful in itself but a meritorious sacrifice on behalf of their families. Immorality is also regarded as shameful for men in Japan, especially in higher class circles.

Prostitution is illegal in Japan except for licensed prostitutes. In Tokyo prostitutes must live in one of the four segregated quarters of which Yoshiwara is the oldest. Most of the other big towns have similar licensed quarters. Plain-clothes



detectives are continually on the look out of unlicensed prostitution which is punishable with three months' imprisonment or fine.

There are about 500 licensed prostitutes in Tokyo out of a population of about 2,500,000 (including suburbs). The Geisha girls are entertainers and not prostitutes. Waitresses in low class restaurants and other women are no doubt frequently immoral but strictly watched by the police. Dedication of girls to God is unknown in Japan. The Yoshiwara and Suzuki, two licensed quarters in Tokyo, are walled and surrounded by a moat. The girls are now not much ill-treated by the brothel keepers, though they were until quite recently. A girl cannot leave the licensed quarter without a permit from the police. The children born of the prostitute are allowed in the brothels, but usually sent away from the brothels to live with the women's relatives. The houses are the private property of the brothel keepers.

Government levies a license fee for each girl in a brothel, and brothels are rated in three classes for licensing purposes. The tax is about 12 yen per year for a girl in a first class brothel. There is also a payment for the night watchmen. No fee is levied for compulsory medical examination. The brothel keepers have to pay for the maintenance of girls confined to hospital.

The fees charged in Tokyo two years ago were 2.50 to 3.00 yen in the first class, 2 yen in the second, and 1.25 in the third (a yen at present rate of exchange is Rs. 1—annas 9). The price of food and liquor in the brothels is fixed. It is proposed to make it illegal for a prostitute to receive more than one man a night. The women are compulsorily examined in rotation once a week at a state hospital attached to each segregated area. The prostitute is also compelled to disinfect herself regularly under police regulations. If a prostitute is found suffering from venereal disease she is detained in hospital till cured. Government pays a part of the expenses of medical examination.

There is a private committee of Trustees for such licensed quarter, and the police work through it. There are no morals or special police.

There is at present a movement led mostly by Christian but also by Buddhist ladies, European, and Japanese to abolish segregated areas. The System is however strongly supported in Japan as preventing ramification of the evil.

Capt. McLennan said weekly medical examination of prostitutes would not eliminate interim infection. Capt. Patel said that it was impossible to provide for the proper examination of all brothel inmates.

Many other witnesses were examined but not one of them suggested regulation or/and compulsory examination of prostitutes. It is relevant to refer here to two books which were then published :

- (1) Prostitution in Europe by Flexner
- (2) Report of the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease in England, appointed by Lloyd George after the First World War. This commission consisted of the most distinguished citizens and doctors. One question which the Commission put to every witness was: "Can a man live without a woman?" The implication of this question was that a man cannot live a life of complete celibacy; it was harmful to his health to do so, and that he would have to lead a sexual life, married or not. This question further implied that venereal disease was therefore likely to occur. Times being what they were then, with a double moral standard for sex life for men and women nobody asked a corollary to this question: "Can a woman live without a man?" Because it was assumed that a woman should and could live without a man.

The U.S. Government had deputed Flexner to study prostitution in Europe. He made most careful investigations in France where regulation prevailed which meant registration of prostitutes and their compulsory medical examination. His findings were that less than 25 per cent of the prostitutes were registered and therefore, medical examination of this 25 per cent did not prevent contracting and spread of venereal disease. Worse than that, the medical examination which prevailed in France was a farce. Flexner was present at one such examination. A doctor took 60 seconds—1 minute—to examine thirty prostitutes. and he did not use a napkin between two examinations. The certificate of good health gave a false sense of safety for even if the test of good health was correct for the moment, the prostitute was likely to contract disease and to pass it on to her customers before the next weekly or fortnightly examination.

Flexner's book settled once and for all this question of registration and medical examination of prostitutes viz., that it was impractical and unhelpful and did not prevent the spread of disease and on the top of it it was unethical, as it was only confined to women and not to men who were equally responsible for the contracting and spread of the disease.

Our Committee agreed that our legislation should aim at the procurer, and the pimp and we were strongly of opinion that making of brothels illegal would achieve the desired results.

The main recommendation of the majority of the Committee was to make illegal—

- (1) the keeping of brothels ;
- (2) the procuring of women;
- (3) the letting of houses for purposes of prostitution.

The Committee did not advocate that the powers which should be taken in the proposed legislation should be used otherwise than gradually. It would be necessary to allow a fairly long time to elapse between the passing of the Act and the date of bringing it into force. Action was to be first taken against the sanitarily most degraded brothels, a strict watch would have to be kept against the creation of new brothels and the advent of fresh girls to the old ones. The eventual result of this change of law, the Committee thought, would be the disappearance of the brothel type of prostitute. Prostitution would become furtive instead of open and dissociated instead of gregarious. The Committee recommended the appointment of special women police.

The Committee was further opposed to compulsory examination of prostitutes. The Committee further said: "The suggestion of state regulation, advanced mainly on hygienic grounds, we have rejected because the hygienic case for it is not convincing and the moral case against it is overwhelming". Further "The state must at the least stand for humanity and the traffic in prostitutes is one of the most inhuman trades in the world." The Committee was in favour of whipping as the most effective punishment.

Among those who signed the majority report were Sir Jamsedjee Jeejeebhoy, E. J. Palmer (Lord Bishop of Bombay), Faiz B. Tyabji, K. Natarajan, R. M. Grey and Kanji Dwarkadas. Both Dr. Goodier and S. G. Velinkar approved of the whole report but dissented on one or two points. Dr. Goodier entirely

disapproved of anything like a public campaign of instruction in sex-matters or of any attempt to interfere with or substitute for the duty of parents and guardians in this direction.

Sir Maurice Hayward, Home Member, acting on the report of the Committee, introduced on the 30th July, 1923 in the Bombay Legislative Council — the last session of the first Montague Council — the Prevention of Prostitution Bill. In moving the first reading of the Bill, Hayward said that Government had to proceed with caution and that in the first instance had to be attacked the roots of the evil as represented in the male-persons living on the earnings of prostitutes and in the persons procuring and importing women for the purpose of prostitution. Government felt that "if it could cut at its roots, then there would be hope that the tree itself would wither" and it would become a practical proposition afterwards to close and entirely do away with brothels". Hayward continued: "We have almost entirely accepted the recommendations of the Committee. It is true that the Committee recommended the suppression of brothels but they themselves suggested that that would have to proceed with caution. We have recognised their advice for caution and postponed that part of the legislation till we can see the results of the present bill, which we hope will be passed into law at this session."

I was the next speaker. The Governor had sent me word through his Home Secretary to accept the Bill as proposed and not to move amendments which might jeopardise the passing of the Bill at this last session. I readily agreed but made it a condition that the Home Member would give an undertaking on the floor of the House that the Bill would be amended in the future making all brothel-keeping illegal. This undertaking was given.

I said:

"Mr. President, I have the very greatest pleasure in supporting the first reading of this Bill. The Committee appointed by Government in 1921 made three main recommendations. They asked the Government to make illegal the following acts (1) the keeping of brothels, (2) the procuring of women, (3) the letting of houses for purposes of prostitution. Government have very cautiously—Government always moves cautiously, sometimes too cautiously — acted upon only one of the recommendations. Honourable Members of this House must be aware that the

report Government had about the working of the Acts in Burma and Ceylon made them hesitate before plunging into the whole matter all at once. I would have very much liked Government to accept *in toto* all the recommendations of the majority of the Prostitution Committee. I shall give my reasons briefly later on, but I want to deal just now with the proposed legislation. I must say that Government in accepting the two recommendations to which the Hon'ble the Leader of the House alluded, have indeed taken the first step and a very big first step indeed. By trying to deal with the class of people, the most degraded of humanity, in the way Government now propose, it would certainly be accepted that a great deal of preventible vice and cruelty which surrounds this vice, will be eradicated. And I shall show how. It is common knowledge that the class of pimps, procurers, and brothel keepers with whom we are dealing in this legislation, keep up a constant supply in order to make money, a constant supply of fresh girls, importing them from all parts of the country. I know it for a fact that an organisation, unknown to all of us, but an organisation put on a very sound foundation, does exist in Bombay and elsewhere to carry on this profession of prostitution and brothels in a most organised way. It will be readily admitted that prostitutes cannot carry on their trade for a very long period. Disease overtakes them very shortly after they get into the trade; they get too old very quickly. And in order to continue making money the brothel-keepers, pimps and procurers have to take care that a fresh supply is brought time after time. I know it for a fact. You visit a brothel in Bombay today and visit it after some time. You will not find the same girl in the same house for a very long period. They are taken from one place to another. You will find them once in Bombay, at another time in Hyderabad (Decan), at another time in Karachi. They are always on the move. Unless we deal with the guilty people as strictly as we can, it will not be possible to eradicate the evil. As I said I am not quite satisfied with what the Government have done, but as they have already taken the first step, it is my intention to support this first reading quite whole-heartedly. There is one provision in the bill to which I must refer now. I shall not be misunderstood. I mean the new punishment of whipping. I think I will be justified in dealing with this just now. This question of whip-

ping of pimps and procurers should not be confused with the whipping of prisoners for other offences. As a humanitarian, as a theosophist, it pains me to agree that any human being should be made to suffer this sort of punishment. And it has certainly pained me very very much indeed to have to agree that the class of people, with whom we are dealing, should be whipped. But I am convinced that that is the only form of punishment which acts as a deterrent with them. Fine them; they will pay the fine. They have not to earn it; they will make the girls carry on their nefarious trade and pay the fine out of their earnings. Punish them with imprisonment; they will come out and start their trade all over again. But, if you whip them, I am quite sure, that will act as a deterrent, and I am told it does act as a deterrent. I, therefore, hope that my honourable friends here will not object to this punishment which has been recommended unanimously by the Prostitution Committee".

There was a long and interesting debate. The consensus of opinion was for making illegal all brothels—run by men as well as women. This is clear from the report of the Select Committee. That the Bill as it was did not make all brothels illegal and was not broad enough to cope with the demands of social purity and human justice became clear during the Select Committee stage. Both official (as represented by the Home Member and the Legal Remembrancer) and the non-official (which represented the Indian view-point) opinion was in favour of widening the scope of the Act by making all brothels, run by men or women, illegal. A technical difficulty of "previous sanction of the Governor-General" came in the way, as will be seen from the following sentence in the Select Committee's report: "We considered at some length the question whether in Section 5, the word "male" should be deleted, so as to give the section a much wider application, but since the change will probably involve a reference to the Government of India for previous sanction, which would delay the passing of the measure, we decided that the change will be better effected hereafter by an amending Act." This report of the Select Committee was unanimous, and in it we had a definite undertaking from the Government of Bombay, through its Home Member, so to amend the Prostitution Act as to make all brothels illegal. The bill, as amended by the Select Committee, in some respects was finally passed

on 6th August, 1923.

This passing of the Prevention of Prostitution Act in August, 1923 was a first big step forward. My friends and I realised that it was not enough to have a strong Act put on the Statute book. It is true that legislation must go ahead of public opinion, for that by itself would help public opinion to grow. But legislation cannot go too far ahead of public opinion. We therefore set out on our next important job.

We started the Bombay Vigilance Association in 1924. I was one of the founder members. Sir Chunilal V. Mehta, then member of Government, was the first President and he selected me as its first Hon. Secretary which post I continued to hold for seven years till 1931 a year after the Prevention of Prostitution Act was amended making all brothel keeping illegal.

Among the main objects of the Bombay Vigilance Association were:

- (1) To secure recognition of the principle that the moral law is the same for both men and women.
- (2) To suppress and prevent the traffic in women and girls, and the outrage, corruption, abduction and prostitution of persons under eighteen.
- (3) To carry on active propaganda work for the ultimate and complete abolition of brothels.

We immediately undertook the propaganda work with a view to help create well-informed public opinion by leaflets, pamphlets and newspaper articles. Our objective was clear and definite. The Children's Act was passed in 1924, and it was our objective to see that it was immediately enforced. In 1925, the Age of Consent Bill was passed, raising the age of consent to 13 and 14 years for married and unmarried girls respectively. I shall deal with the enforcement of the Children's Act and the passing of the Age of Consent legislation in the next chapters.

The policy of toleration by segregation was still in force and it was our object to work for its eventual abolition. We realised that the problem we faced was too gigantic for abolition to be practicable at one full swoop. The idea was to work by degrees—removing brothels from tramways, closing the most insanitary houses and repatriating up-country and foreign girls. All this could not be done until our crying need had been satisfied—the education of public opinion.

We were able to stir up the conscience of Bombay. Lady Hirabai Cowasji Jehangir, visited the brothel area with us to learn first hand the terrible conditions prevailing. She spoke sympathetically and understandingly to the unfortunate inmates of the brothels.

Oswald and Lady Cynthia Mosley who toured in India in the fall of 1925 spent a few days in Bombay. Graham Pole had given them a letter of introduction to me. Lady Cynthia—Lord Curzon's daughter—as beautiful as she was intelligent, as gentle as she was beautiful and intelligent, showed keen interest in my social work and she and Oswald, the notorious Fascist leader of the Thirties and the Second World War went round with me the working class area and visited the one-room tenements. They also spent a whole night—10 P.M. to 4 in the morning, visiting the brothels with me. Oswald Mosley then was a Labour Member of the House of Commons.

I presided at a lecture given by Oswald Mosley at a workers' meeting at the Damodar Thackersey Hall on "What British Labour Government will do for Indian Labour". The Hall was packed to capacity. Mosley promised Indian Labour a fair deal from British Labour and British Government and as good as said that he would one day be the Prime Minister of the British Labour Government. I remember Sir Victor Sassoon and I were at a dinner party where Sir Oswald and Lady Cynthia were the Chief Guests. Oswald talked most of the time and made in bad taste personal criticism against his father-in-law, Lord Curzon. I remember both Sir Victor and I agreed at that time that Oswald was an insincere boaster and bluffer. Lady Cynthia was quite different, understanding, intelligent, sincere and she accepted fully the real implications of her being in the British Labour Party. She was keenly interested as much in Indian politics as in the multifarious problems of Indian women. I sent her my pamphlet containing four articles on Indian women, including Child Marriages, Age of Consent, Brothels Legislation and the Indian Factory Women. She replied to me (Sept. 1925):

"It was with the very greatest pleasure that I received your letter and pamphlets the other day. We were really delighted to hear from you and you could not have sent us anything which we would be more interested in than the



subject of your pamphlets. We are being constantly asked about the position as regards child marriage, etc. and I have something authentic to quote from and it will be of very real assistance to us..... I am going to stand for Parliament at the next election and have just been adopted as prospective Labour Candidate for the town of Stoke-on-Trent where I shall have quite a good chance of getting in. I wonder what you all in Bombay thought of the election of Mr. Patel (Vithalbhai) and of his Presidential speech. I wonder if you are coming to England this winter. You must be sure to look us up if you do."

Ruttie Jinnah took interest in my social and labour work. Both she and Jinnah encouraged me to do this work. She was a source of inspiration in my work and next to Mrs. Besant she was the most helpful and healthy influence on me and my work. She, Jinnah and I used to discuss my investigations in the brothel area and they took practical and realistic point of view. What we were after was to reduce the cruelties and inhumanities of the "trade" and we did succeed to some extent.

In her letter to me dated 28th August, 1927, Ruttie showed her keen interest in this work:

"... When are you going to take me round so that I may see for myself the conditions existent and the life lived by those poor women? The places I want to see are those commonly called "brothels" and *not* where the girls work independently".

Ruttie wanted to see the living conditions of the brothel area at first hand, and Miss Davis, she and I toured round the area for hours together, visiting one brothel after another.

On 29th October, 1925, Mrs. Dorothy Jinarajdas wrote to me:

"I imagine that you are now quite strong as you sound to be going on finely with your work. I was so interested to get your long letter regarding your Vigilance Committee work. We are progressing here. Mr. Shesha Iyengar has drawn up a Bill to regulate brothels. It is a fairly satisfactory Bill. I do not know if it will get through without trouble as the Commissioner of Police here wants to insert a clause regarding licensing brothels and segregation. That we oppose absolutely. That system has failed in all countries and where it is still in force they are

trying to get rid of it. It has not in the least checked disease. We have had an added difficulty in Madras owing to the Devadassi system but, rather with difficulty, I have got the Committee *not* to put in a clause excluding Devadassis. They must be classed as ordinary prostitutes and those who live on the earnings of the devadassi must come under the same law as others who do this."

I took the fight against the brothels to the floor of the House of Commons. George Lansbury asked a question on 22nd November, 1927, why brothels were not made illegal in Bombay. Lord Winterton, the reactionary Under Secretary of State for India, as was his wont, tried to escape from an embarrassing position, by giving vague and incorrect answer.

Lord Winterton replied to George Lansbury: "The Prostitution Act did not purport to suppress brothels which step it was felt premature and that the Bombay Legislative Council had negatived a proposal for the extension of the penalties for living on the earnings of prostitution to women".

I immediately criticised Winterton in the "Times of India". In my letter which appeared in that paper on November 24, I said:

"It seems Lord Winterton never read or heard of George Washington when he was a little boy, for truthfulness does not seem to be his weakness. And not suffering from an overdose of this otherwise necessary qualification for any decent statesman holding any responsible position in the State, Lord Winterton finds no difficulty in disposing of inconvenient questions on India asked in the House of Commons. Replying to a question in the Commons, Lord Winterton said the Prostitution Act did not purport to suppress brothels "which step, it was felt was premature and that the Bombay Legislative Council had negatived a proposal for the extension of the penalties for living on the earnings of prostitutes, to women." This is an inaccurate statement.

Lord Winterton anxious to shake off responsibility of Government on this grave question, airily added that "this matter (suppression of brothels) would very naturally be left to the Bombay Public and Council who were fully competent to deal with it". The Bombay public, has, at the big public meeting held last week under the auspices of the Bombay Vigilance and

28 other Associations asked for the suppression of brothels. The public meeting with Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas as Chairman had urged Government to undertake the necessary legislation for the suppression of brothels. The responsibility now rests with the Government, for no legislation unless initiated or supported by Government has the slightest chance of being passed in the Council.

I hope that the Government of Bombay are more alive to their responsibility than the ignorant and truculent Under Secretary of State”.

The League of Nations' Report on the Traffic in Women and Children was published in 1927. The following is my article on this report in "New India" of 14th September, 1927:

“The unkind and impatient critics of the League of Nations entirely lose sight of the great work on the social side that it has been doing ever since its inception. The International Labour Conference, a wing of the League of Nations, has created world opinion in favour of advanced Labor legislation and better conditions of work. The cause of women and children working in factories and in mines and on the field has been espoused by the League of Nations, and if in India, Labour legislation has gone through the Indian Legislatures with next to no opposition, it is to a great extent due to the moral backing of the International Labor Conference. Whatever its drawbacks on its political side—and these drawbacks cannot be remedied by intemperate ridicule—there can be no two opinions on the fact that the League of Nations has awakened the social conscience of the different Nations of the world. An idea of how big this work on the social side is, can be gauged by a perusal of the Report of the Special Body of Experts on Traffic in Women and Children. The Council of the League of Nations decided in 1923 to institute an investigation in Europe, America and the Near East to ascertain certain facts relative to the traffic for immoral purposes in women and children, and appointed a Body of Experts, composed of persons chosen on the ground of special knowledge and qualifications.

This Committee submitted its Report, divided in two parts, in February of this year. The first part, which has been published, contains a concise account of the facts disclosed by the investigation and a statement of the conclusions founded upon

them. The second part, which contains a large mass of important material, arranged according to countries, has not yet been published, but it is hoped, it soon will be. The Experts have collected full facts regarding the existence, nature and volume of the international traffic, the places where it is carried on and the attempts made in different countries to fight it.

It is impossible to deal fully in the course of an article with this vast problem as it is disclosed in the excellent Report. I can only attempt to touch the problem as it affects us in India, particularly Bombay, and then too, I must admit, I can but touch the fringe of the problem.

Bombay has made a good beginning to tackle the problem. Correct knowledge of the system and extent of prostitution and all the intricacies arising therefrom would help to create a strong public opinion, an intelligent understanding and co-operation to put down the evil.

Briefly, the system in Bombay is that the "business" of prostitution is carried on on a big commercial basis, and it is rightly called commercialised vice. A man or woman, or a group of them manage somehow to secure under their control a number of young girls, whom they force to lead a life of shame, and pocket almost all the "profits" that the girls make: these girls are expected to make a certain amount of money every day, failure to do which results in inhumanly cruel treatment, the extent of which the wildest imagination cannot visualise. The words "commercialised vice" connote a net-work of wide organisations, confined not merely within the geographical boundaries of one nation, but all over the world; as the bullies, the "third-party" interest behind the "trade," must make money, they make ingenious efforts to create and stimulate the demand. This is a traffic of international dimensions, which the League of Nations—all honour to it, and more strength to its elbow—has set out to fight.

"The measures to which we have referred," say the League of Nations Experts, "are not likely to be successful, while the incentive to money-making remains. Profit is at the bottom of the business. It is the third-party element which makes the traffic in women so tragic an affair in its worst aspects. If the third-party could be eliminated, the battle would be largely won. Some countries realise this principle and punish severely *souteneurs*, *madames*, and others who live on the proceeds of pros-

titution. Instances have been given of effective legislation dealing with this point. There are many countries where no such action is taken. Foreign souteneurs, procurers, madames, and other persons of the kind should be excluded or deported as a preventive measure. Governments will be well advised to review their laws relating to living on the earnings of prostitution and, if necessary, to strengthen them. The difficulty of eliminating the third party element becomes greater in countries where the keeping of brothels is legal". Who can deny that the existence of brothels in Bombay increases the volume of prostitution?

It will be easily conceded that if the problem were merely local, it would be less difficult to handle than when it is unlimited in its scope. The international traffic increases the extent and consequent evil of prostitution.

Therefore the following statement in the Report should arrest the attention of Government and all other right-minded people.

"With regard to traffic in women to and from the East, there is evidence of a route via Egypt to Bombay. In Roumania, officials gave information including the names of traffickers and the details of their operations from Poland and Roumania to the East and to Bombay."

The Government of Bombay would do well, if they have not done so already, to get into touch with the Council of the League of Nations and get this information regarding the names of traffickers and the details of their operations, so that they could check further importation of girls from Roumania and Poland, and bring the offenders to book.

In Chapter VII of the Report, it is stated that articles 3 and 4 of the International agreement of 1904, which deal with the repatriation of prostitutes, require that Governments should ascertain the identity and civil status of foreign women and girls who are prostitutes and try to discover who has caused them to leave their country, with a view to steps being taken for their repatriation. This procedure has not been generally adopted, but it has been replaced in some countries by a system of refusing admittance to women suspected of being prostitutes, or of deporting them when discovered. It is very encouraging however, to read in the Report that Japan appears to have adopted

the policy of repatriating women of Japanese nationality found to be engaged in prostitution in foreign countries.

The Government of Bombay should arrange with the Japanese Consul in Bombay to repatriate Japanese prostitutes from here. I recently interviewed the Japanese Consul regarding this and found him very sympathetic. Speaking recently at a meeting at the Guildhouse, Dame Rachel Crowdy, the Secretary of the League of Nations' Committee of Special Body of Experts, said:

"The East is giving a very interesting lead, and more progress has been made by Japan during the last four years than by any other member of the League. In 1924, they decided they could not face the world when their women were known all over the world as prostitutes. They sent a notice to each of their consuls saying that they wished to repatriate all the Japanese prostitutes at the expense of the Government. This year a Bill will be submitted in Parliament with provisions for putting an end to registration in Japan by 1933 and paying compensation to owners of registered houses. Japan has raised the marriage age to sixteen and Turkey has raised it to fifteen."

Commenting on this, Dr. Annie Besant wrote recently:

"It is good to see the East once more setting an example in sex morality to the West."

India is a signatory to the International Convention of 1921, and it would be useful to find out in what way the Government of India and the Provincial Governments have given effect to the various provisions of the Convention. The main requirements in regard to legislative measures for the prevention of traffic in women are contained in the first two articles of the Convention of 1910 as supplemented by articles 2, 3 and 5 of the Convention of 1921. Under these provisions, Governments undertake to prosecute and punish, notwithstanding that various acts constituting the offence may have been committed in different countries, (a) any person who, in order to gratify the passions of any person, has procured, enticed, or led away, even with her consent, a woman or girl under age for immoral purposes (under age is defined as meaning under the age of 21), (b) any person who, in order to gratify the passions of another person has, by fraud or by means of violence, threats, abuse or

authority or any other method of compulsion, led away a woman or girl over age for immoral purposes. So far by foreign we have understood non-Indian; but a recent amendment of the Indian Penal Code has immense future possibilities, for it (Section 366 B) lays down:

"Whoever imports into British India from any country outside India any girl under the age of 21 years with intent that she may be, or knowing it to be likely that she will be, forced or seduced to illicit intercourse with another person, and whoever with such intent or knowledge imports into British India from any State in India any such girl who has with the like intent or knowledge been imported into India, whether by himself or by another person, shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to 10 years and shall also be liable to fine."

This refers to the importation of girls from the Indian States to British India. It is not known yet to what extent this section has been given effect to and with what results. Driving this section to its logical conclusion it should not be difficult to deport to their respective native places, all women coming not only from the Indian States to British India but also from one Province in British India to another. This will help in further reduction of the extent of prostitution and make the problem more easily manageable.

I have referred to some of the articles of the International Conventions of 1904, 1910 and 1921. A passing reference need only be made to articles 1 and 2 of the Convention of 1904. They provide for the establishment in each country of some authority charged with the co-ordination of all information relative to the procuring of women or girls for immoral purposes abroad; and that Governments should undertake to have a watch kept, especially in railway stations, ports of embarkation, and en route to prevent traffic in women and girls. Would the Government of Bombay kindly say in what way they are carrying out these provisions?

The following statement in the Report should serve both as an encouragement and a stimulus to the Bombay Vigilance Association, and it should also goad the public of Bombay to give to the Association more support, moral, financial, and numerical:

"It will be seen from the second part of the Report

that the countries in which the traffic and commercialised vice have been most successfully combated are also those in which charitable organisations have been most active."

The evil is so big that all concerned must seek and give fullest co-operation. Government by themselves cannot do much, the Vigilance Association by itself cannot do much, but co-operation between Government and the Vigilance Association, backed by a strong public opinion, in the course of the next few years, will go a long way in reducing the extent of the evil of the traffic. One notes with satisfaction that such co-operation is forthcoming in Bombay, and the fruits of such co-operation can be seen in the starting of the Children's Aid Society and the putting in force of the Bombay Children's Act. This article would be incomplete if I failed to mention that the Government of Bombay have given sufficient proof of their zeal to combat this evil. They are committed to making brothels illegal as recommended by the majority of the Prostitution Committee appointed by them in 1921, and it is to be hoped Government will at the next session fulfil the undertaking given by them.

I cannot end my article better than by quoting fully the concluding paragraph of the Report of the Experts. "We cannot," they say, "close our remarks on this subject without some reference to the general question of prostitution. The causes of prostitution are deep-rooted; it exists to a smaller or greater extent in all countries and no solution of the problem has been found by any of them. It is apparent, however, that the attitude of public opinion towards it has a direct bearing on its commercialised aspects, which find their worst development in the traffic in women. Prostitution should be regarded as a public evil to be kept within the narrowest possible limits. It is especially important that the youth of both sexes should be encouraged to view this matter from the highest moral stand-point. Safeguards of all kinds against international traffic are difficult to enforce when the lowering of the standard of morality serves to create an insistent demand. The remedy lies in a sound and vigilant public policy."

A public meeting was held at Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall on 16th November, 1927 regarding commercialised vice. Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas presided. The following resolution was passed:



“(a) This public meeting of the citizens of Bombay convened under the auspices of the Bombay Vigilance Association and 28 other Societies desires to express emphatically its opinion that the existence of brothels and of a vice district in the City is a great evil which calls for urgent action on the part of Government, in as much as it encourages and facilitates the commercialised traffic in women and girls, offers ample opportunities to pimps, procurers and other agents employed in this traffic to entice, seduce and terrorise their victims and constitutes a great danger to the physical and moral well being of the people of this City. It, therefore, urges upon Government the clamant need of the early introduction of legislation which shall make the keeping of brothels illegal. This meeting, however, realises that there are some practical difficulties in the way of the immediate and total suppression of all brothels in the City, and, it, therefore, suggests that while the keeping of brothels should be made illegal, the policy of closing them down should be given effect to gradually, during an operative period of three years from the date when the proposed legislation will come into force.

“(b) This Meeting further desires to express its firm conviction that the moral law is the same for both men and women and it accordingly requests Government to take strong measures, if necessary by further legislation, for the punishment of pimps, procurers and other agents, men and women, who subsist wholly or in part on the earnings of prostitution, and of landlords who knowingly let their premises for the purpose of prostitution.

“(c) This Meeting also desires to invite the attention of the Government of Bombay to articles 3 and 4 relating to the repatriation of foreign prostitutes, in the International Convention of 1904, as ratified by the International Convention of 1921, to which India is a signatory, and urges that as a first step towards the suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children, foreign and Indian, Government should take early steps to deport all foreign prostitutes, and also all prostitutes whose domicile of origin is outside Bombay.”

The resolution was moved by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu in a most eloquent and stirring speech and among the other speakers were

R. P. Masani, W. H. Neilson (Chairman, Bombay Port Trust), Miss Dickinson, H. M. Rahimtoola and myself.

Public opinion at last triumphed. Government responded. Full credit should be given to the Home Member, Sir Ernest Hotson, for initiating legislation to make *all* brothel keeping, run by men as well as women, illegal. His speech in moving the first reading of the Bill, on 25th March, 1930 may be quoted in parts as it explains the full scope of the legislation proposed :

"I regard this Bill, Sir, as one of great importance, and of great interest to those who have at heart the cause of social purity . . . . Before I come to the merits of the subject, I must express my personal gratification that a Bill with which I am so closely concerned should have already made history. To the introduction of this Bill, this House owes its first lady member, who has been nominated as an expert in order that she may give the House the benefit of her special acquaintance with the difficult problems involved in the Bill. To return to the Bill. The statement of objects and reasons is brief, but I hope clear. One of the main purposes which have moved the Government and the numerous Societies who have for years agitated for an amendment of the law, is to do something to assist towards the disappearance of the vice area for which Bombay is, I regret to say, notorious. As a step towards that end, and to make easier the repression of commercialised vice, wherever it may be found, it is proposed to make more comprehensive the definition of the word "brothel" to render liable to punishment female as well as male keepers of brothels, and to penalise such landlords as, lured by high rents, knowingly permit their premises to be used as brothels.

"We do not imagine that we can put a stop to prostitution. The law can do little to bring that about. For that we must look to a wider diffusion of the knowledge of the laws of health and of social hygiene, and to the growth of a public sentiment which will ruthlessly condemn as a crime against humanity the pursuit of a pleasure which involves the degradation and ruin of other human beings. Society has not, in this country or anywhere else, reached the stage of civilisation at which prostitution can be abolished, or perhaps even much reduced. But it is beyond doubt that the mere existence of an area in which by custom rather than by law vice is so far tolerated that it has

become the chief local industry, is in itself an incitement to vice. Many a young man, whether resident in Bombay or very often a passing visitor, goes to the vice area because he has heard of its existence, and is curious to see or has been told by friends that it is one of the sights of Bombay which no one should miss and when there he gives way to his excitement. Many of these young men, in all probability, would never have gone in search of a brothel had it been even a little bit more difficult to find.

"And because this area exists, because human bodies are there on sale, and human souls are there given over to ruin, occupants for these rooms have to be found, and a lucrative trade is created. Every part of India is forced to pay its tribute of innocent girlhood, many other countries contribute their quota to the market of human wreckage. We cannot, by passing this Bill, or even by assuming that its provisions are given full effect, prevent that trade, but we can, and hope we should succeed in so doing make it less profitable and more dangerous than it is today. Again, I recur to the phrase 'commercialised vice'. That is the enemy which we seek to defeat. We are not attempting to dispute the right of any woman to make such use as she may choose of her own body, however foolish and calamitous her choice may be, but we desire to arrest the above traffic by which women are deprived of their freedom, their health and their self-respect for the financial profit of those who exploit them. I wish to assure this House that we have all along been alive to our responsibilities. I have gone slowly because I was determined not to move until I was fully satisfied not only that the step proposed was theoretically desirable, but also that what we wish to do was practicable, that we should not be incurring the risk of introducing new and grave forms of corruption into our administration.

"Time does not permit me to mention all who have striven for the cause of social reform in Bombay in these last few years. Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas has never spared himself in pleading for the reform which he advocated when he was a Member of this House. Sir Phiroze Sethna and Mr. R. P. Masani have lent their great abilities to the advocacy of the cause.

"In Bombay, a small police force (Vigilance Police) would have to be employed. Those who had studied the subject care-

fully would realise that experience all over the world had shown and must show that registration and licensing instead of making things better made them worse. It would not decrease the amount of prostitution; on the contrary it would increase it".

The Prevention of Prostitution (Amendment) Bill was passed at the next monsoon session of the Bombay Legislative Council in Poona.

Though after the passing of this Bill making brothels illegal, I resigned from the Secretaryship of the Bombay Vigilance Association, I kept up my interest in the work. The following letter signed by me appeared in the 'Times of India' of 6th April, 1938:

"At the Annual General Meeting of the Bombay Vigilance Association, the Hon. Sir John Beaumont, Chief Justice, advocated control of prostitution and medical inspection of prostitutes. He said: 'Unless prostitution was controlled, there was danger of public health'. The Chief Justice further advocated segregation and suggested that the prostitutes could then be under the observance and control of officers. The Chief Justice is also responsible for the statement that the existence of prostitutes had saved many homes from miseries.

"With all due respect to the Chief Justice, may I submit that the views to which Sir John Beaumont gave expression were held in the 19th Century, but that they are all exploded theories now? It is humiliating for a woman to be forced to regular medical inspection, when men are not subjected to similar medical inspection. Besides it had been found from experience of the countries where such a system of inspection prevailed that these inspections are worse than useless. They give a false sense of safety and they do not in any way help reduction or control of disease.

"The Bombay Prostitution Committee of 1921-22 which was appointed by Government, acting on the resolution moved by me in the Bombay Legislative Council in September, 1921, and of which I was one of the Members, definitely decided against segregation, as segregation is, firstly, impossible, secondly, it advertises vice, concentrating it, as it does, in one locality.

"Sir John rightly refers to the necessity of stopping the commercialised aspect of the trade, but his very suggestion of medical inspection, segregation and control by an officer makes pros-

titution a State-recognised 'trade' and would, therefore, be an indirect encouragement to the profession and would lend respectability to it.

"Sir John refers to prostitutes as rescuing homes from miseries. This is a proposition against which I vehemently protest. Who are the prostitutes? They too come from some home and they are daughters, sisters and wives as much as 'respectable' women are, with this difference—and this difference should weigh in favour of prostitutes—that the prostitutes are unprotected and are victims of men's greed and lust, whilst 'respectable' society women lead a sheltered life. All the more reason that prostitutes need greater protection, from society than is vouchsafed in the indefensible and unjust argument of the Chief Justice.

"Dr. A. Herbert Gray in his book "Men, Women and God" says: "The prostitute exists because men say they must indulge in their passions and women believe it. She is the incarnation not of her own but of society's shame. She is the scapegoat for thousands, who live on in careless comforts. Every man who touches her pushes her farther down, and our hollow pretence of social morality is built upon her quivering body."

Sir Phiroze Sethna, President of the Vigilance Association, is reported to have said that he agreed with the views of the Chief Justice and stated that the task of the Vigilance Association was not against prostitutes as such but to get the men and women who live on their earnings.

This statement needs a little explanation, for Sir Phiroze could not have meant that he agreed with the Chief Justice's views in regard to medical inspection, control and segregation; for the very first object of the Bombay Vigilance Association of which I was Hon. Secretary from 1924 to 1931, is "to secure recognition of the principle that the moral law is the same for both men and women".

Reference might be made here to the League of Nations' reports of the experts based on their investigations made throughout the world. It is not from a narrow-minded religious or sentimental point of view that a demand is made for the abolition by law of brothels or for giving up medical inspection and regulation. Regulation has failed in all the countries where it has been in force and it is rather late and futile to advocate its re-introduction in India!

**"The Times of India" published another letter from me on the subject on 26th June, 1943:**

**"Some two or three weeks back it was reported that the spreading of commercialised vice in Bombay with the concomitant danger of venereal infection was engaging the serious attention of the authorities. One of the proposals, we are told, is for compulsory medical examination of all women known to be in the business and deportation of all those found to be suffering from any infectious disease. The report further says that the evil has spread to non-tolerated and respectable areas; that venereal wards in the city hospitals are full and the clinics and prophylactic stations find it almost impossible to cope with the increased number of patients seeking help and advice.**

**"The source of this information has not been disclosed. But knowing as I do the policy of the Government of Bombay and from the inquiries that I have made, I feel confident that the authorities concerned, the Government of Bombay, would never agree to the introduction of regulation, i.e., licensed houses and medical examination of women in Bombay Presidency. Time and again ghosts are created regarding the spread of venereal diseases and false measures are suggested for its eradication or its control, which in the end would bring more injustice, cruelty and humiliation to our unfortunate sisters whom it is our duty to befriend and help.**

**"The proper way to lessen venereal disease is not medical inspection of women, but to inculcate in the boys who come to India from abroad a spirit of friendship, regard and respect for women. The proper method of control is to stop drunkenness and debauchery. We in India have a great responsibility towards the brave and noble women of Great Britain. These boys who come here to fight for freedom against Nazism have their mothers, sisters, wives and sweethearts somewhere in England. What will these women in England say to us if it is made easy for these boys to turn themselves into physical and moral wrecks?"**

**Presiding in 1958 over the All-India Conference on Social and Moral Hygiene, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, then Congress President, now Minister for Information and Broadcasting, said that prostitution and traffic in women should be rooted out and the offenders should be punished severely. Dealing with the vari-**

ous aspects of the problem of commercialised vice, Mrs. Gandhi said: "There is first of all the economic aspect. Extreme poverty and inadequacy of employment opportunities force many women into this profession and compel parents to sell their daughters. This is a matter of economic planning and cannot be dealt with thoroughly until the general economic condition in the country is improved."

Dr. Sushila Nayyar, the President of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene in India and now Union Minister for Health, said that immoral traffic in women still continued in certain hilly regions along the Himalayas. If a determined effort was made by the people and the police, this vice could be stopped. She demanded that traffickers in women should be publicly flogged.

On March 9, 1963, the "Indian Express" wrote an editorial under caption "Crime and Punishment":

"An angry judge is not a wise judge and judicial indignation is seldom justified. But there are issues of a nature so atrocious that a judge would be less than human if he did not feel indignant and failed to reflect his righteous indignation in the sentence awarded. Such a crime was the one with which Mr. V. D. Tulzapurkar, Principal Judge, City Civil and Sessions Court, Bombay, had to deal with the other day. The accused, a taxi-driver, took the meanest possible advantage of a defenceless college girl—a stranger to the City—who trusted him and betrayed her in a grievous manner while she was in his clutches. The charges of kidnapping and criminal assault were proved; and the judge sentenced him to 10 years rigorous imprisonment on each count, regretting that the law prevented him from awarding whipping.

"Revenge, said Bacon, is wild justice. Criminal justice is civilised revenge. Normally even criminal justice need not be vindictive. But there are crimes of violence of such a brutal and inhuman character that they provoke a vindictive sentence.

"A case of a similar nature occurred in America several years ago. There too a respectable college girl was waylaid, gagged and kidnapped by two miscreants in their motor car. They drove her to a distant garage where she was criminally assaulted by both and ultimately abandoned more dead than alive in a ditch by the wayside. But luckily for the law in the

course of their nefarious design, the ruffians passed through several States in some of which rape was a capital offence. The court holding that the crime being of a continuing nature attracted the law of every State through which they passed and sentenced them to death. While a sanguinary penal code is outdated, judicial leniency in crimes of violence is entirely misplaced and indirectly encourages brutal crimes."

The "Indian Express" published my letter on 15th March, 1963:

"I am in entire agreement with your admirable editorial in regard to the perfectly justified judgment of Mr. V. D. Tulzapurkar, Chief Judge, City Civil and Sessions Court, Bombay, in the case in which he convicted a taxi-driver to ten years rigorous imprisonment for kidnapping and criminally assaulting a college girl. The Judge rightly regretted that he could not award the punishment of flogging.

"I confess in some matters, for example, when I see a man or a woman hitting a child or a dog, I do not think in terms of non-violence. In the Bombay Legislative Council in 1923—42 years ago—I supported in the debate on the Prevention of Prostitution Bill a clause for flogging for pimps, procurers and those who live on the earnings of misled girls.

"A pimp or a procurer or one living on the earnings of prostitutes would easily afford to go to jail or to pay a heavy fine because their 'business' goes on all the time when they are in jail but the only punishment these inhuman scoundrels understand is flogging. They are generally physical and moral cowards and the punishment of flogging has a deterrent effect on them. Similarly, I have no hesitation in recommending the same kind of punishment of flogging for manufacturers of and dealers in spurious drugs, food profiteers and other anti-social elements.

"It was an act of sickly sentimentality on the part of our Constitution-Makers to stop flogging for all offences; there is no sense in it. It is curious that by such provisions in the Constitution and through some "Fundamental Rights" anti-social elements like those mentioned above are permitted to escape adequate punishment".



## CHAPTER XVII

### CHILDREN'S ACT ENFORCED: CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

IN January 1922, I was elected for the first time to the Bombay Municipal Corporation and continued to be its member till March, 1935. During the Twenties and Thirties, I was the Hon. Secretary of the Bombay Vigilance Association, the National Baby Week, 1925-28, the Infant Welfare Society, 1926-28, Member of the Committee and Hon. Treasurer of the All India Trade Union Congress, 1919-1927. I was the first Hon. Treasurer of the Children's Aid Society, 1927-28 and its Hon. Secretary, 1938-1941. I was the Hon. General Secretary of the National Home Rule League, 1919-1933. I should add that I was the founder member of the National Home Rule League, the All-India Trade Union Congress, The Bombay Vigilance Association, the National Baby Week and the Children's Aid Society.

In December, 1923, was published in the Bombay Government Gazette the Bombay Children's Bill which the Government of Bombay had said in reply to my question in the Bombay Legislative Council in July, 1921 was already drafted. The reason for this long delay was due to the vacillating attitude of the Government of India.

Writing on this Bill in the Social Service Quarterly of October, 1924, I said: "The Children's Bill can verily be called the Magna Carta of Children. Its full title explains the nature of the Bill—"A Bill to make further provision for the custody and protection of children (under 14 years) and young persons (children between 14 and 16 years) and for the custody, trial and punishment of youthful offenders". Its alternative title can well be "A Bill to prevent cruelty to children entering the ranks of crime". The first impression that one forms on a careful perusal of the Bill is that great care has been taken in its preparation and that it is an excellent Bill.

I continued the article : "There must be the fullest co-operation to the Prostitution Act, 1923. It is hardly necessary for me to dwell at length on the self-evident proposition that in order to mitigate the evils of prostitution and to stop its growth, one must cut at the very root."

I concluded the article : "There must be the fullest co-operation and free discussion between the Government and non-officials. Government backed up by the Legislative Council will have to provide for ample funds for the industrial and certified schools, and when Government, the legislature and the people in general will do their duty, then only can we expect God to respond to the mighty democratic prayer of Ebenezer Elliot :—

"When will Thou save the people?  
O God of Mercy, When?  
The People, Lord, the people,  
Not thrones and crowns, but men;  
God save the people; Thine they are,  
Thy children, as Thine Angels fair;  
From vice, oppression and despair,  
God save the people".

The Bill was passed early in 1925, but nothing tangible was done by Government to enforce the Act. It, therefore, became the first job of the Bombay Vigilance Association to take up the agitation for its enforcement.

About the middle of 1925, C. G. Adam who was formerly Private Secretary to George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, and was now Home Secretary, rang me up and asked me to see him immediately. I went to the Secretariat at once. He told me that Government knew how keen I was on the enforcement of the Bombay Children's Act. But Government's difficulty was that there was no Indian organisation for the working of the Act. Government, therefore, proposed that the Salvation Army which was willing to do so should be given the necessary authority by way of operating the Act and looking after the children affected. Adam wanted my approval for this proposed action. I said I would think over the proposal and give him a reply in a day or two. Adam insisted that I give my reply immediately. I said if he wanted immediate answer, it would be 'No'. I would wait for an Indian organisation to be set up, and I would not mind

the delay." Adam therefore agreed that I should give him my considered opinion next day.

I immediately went and saw Hon. Sir Chunilal Mehta who was the Finance Member and also President of the Bombay Vigilance Association. I told him of my talk with Adam. He told me that Government were trying to bring pressure on him to agree to the Salvation Army being entrusted with the work. Chunilal had opposed it and Government were now making an attempt to my agreeing to it and thus force Chunilal's hands. I informed Adam next day that I disapproved of Government's proposed action and no more was heard of it!

On December 7, 1924, appeared in the 'Times of India' my letter on "Child Murder":

"Your leading article in today's 'Times of India' has not come a day too early. I shall take up the question which you have left aside, namely, 'these larger social and moral questions which cannot be solved.' My faith in humanity, and in those who stand behind it to guide it makes me feel confident and optimistic that sooner or later, sooner rather than later, these questions will be solved, if we are all up and doing. The real culprit is not the poor unfortunate woman who commits the murder of her newborn babe, whom nobody wants here. The real culprit is, as you rightly point out, the man, the blackguard, who cannot be touched, but it should be pointed out that he is not the only culprit. Society at large aids and abets the crime inasmuch as it takes no action to prevent these tragedies. It is the obstinacy of the orthodox Hindu society, which refuses to move with the times in spite of the overwhelming evidence that its doctrines are based on superstition and not on real religious grounds. To these difficulties, big as they are, is added the weight of pride, prejudice and privilege. This orthodox element in the country could be easily tackled by the social reformers in the country but for the fact that the former has found a powerful ally in the Government of India. I ought to explain how.

The Government of India, under the strange plea of religious neutrality, has refused to help social legislation in this country. Take, for example, the legislation on the age of consent for married girls, which is at present ridiculously low, namely 12. The immediate corollary to child-wives of the ages of 12 and 13, is child-widows. Social conditions and customs

prevent her from remarrying. The results are well-known. The girl-widow makes a slip, gets into trouble, and to avoid exposure, murders, or attempts to murder her new-born babe. An attempt, by moving a private bill, was made in the first reformed Legislative Assembly in 1921 to raise the age of consent. Leave to introduce the bill was not granted, Government members remaining neutral. How can they be neutral on a question like this? And the only conclusion, one has regretfully to draw from their attitude, is that they do not care much as to what happens to this country. One cannot write on this question without intense feeling, feeling of despair and disgust. The so-called higher classes in this country and Government do not realise what bad Karma they are creating, which cannot but react on the whole country. It is time they woke up to their responsibility. The duty of the press in this matter is also clear. Public opinion has to be created in order to bring pressure on the authorities that be, and not one article in one paper but hundreds of them in papers in all parts of the country and of all shades of opinion must take up the question of social reform in right earnest.

"I entirely agree with your suggestion in the second paragraph regarding 'the practical measures for checking the evil'. A small attempt is being made by the Bombay Vigilance Association which, when experience is gained it hopes to launch a big scheme for the rescue of our unfortunate sisters. Whether it succeeds or not depends entirely on the support, both moral and financial, which it receives from the public."

Again in 1925 Lord Reading's Government opposed the Age of Consent Bill which meant to raise the age from 12 to 14.

In my article in the 'Times of India' in June, 1925 I wrote: "The Home Member first made a statement in the Assembly that Government would remain neutral, but when he found that the bill was likely to be passed, he went back on the undertaking and opposed the most essential social reform legislation. The reason is not far to seek. Lord Reading's Government always depended on the support of the Conservative, orthodox and reactionary elements in the country and Lord Reading did not want to rub them wrong."

In order to show to Government that there was a strong public opinion in favour of the Bombay Children's Act being put

into force, the Bombay Vigilance Association organized a big public meeting on 28th July, 1926. The Rt. Hon. M. R. Jayakar presided. Among the other speakers were E. J. Bunbury, K. Natarajan, Mrs. F. S. Talyarkhan, Miss M. K. Davis and Mrs. Palmer. The meeting was held under the auspices of the Bombay Vigilance Association and 24 other organisations. The meeting passed the resolution calling upon Government to take steps to put the Bombay Children's Act into operation at an early date. Another resolution urged Government to convene a Conference of representatives of different Associations and individuals interested in the question of Child Welfare with a view to taking concerted action to ensure the proper working of the Act. I went to Poona on 31st July and met Home Member, Hotson. Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, now 88, asked a short notice question in the Bombay Legislative Council on August 2nd, about the Children's Act not having been given effect to. The Hon. Mr. Hotson replying to the question said that the intention of Government was to follow the example of other Governments and to introduce the Act by degrees. They were going to introduce, very shortly, parts two and three. The rules had been framed for the purpose, and had been circulated to several societies and persons interested in the matter. Many of the Societies, which came under the definition of place of safety as set forth in the Act, were reluctant to be certified under the Act and very few of them were willing to take in children, unless Government would pay for them a capitation grant for each child admitted. In the present financial situation, it was very difficult to get money.

Continuing, Mr. Hotson said he had the pleasure of a short conversation with Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas and he and his friends thought it would be desirable to have a conference to discuss the whole subject, and he thought if such a conference was held, it was possible to appeal to the charitable public of Bombay and get some money for the purpose. The Hon. Member said he had not had time to consider the matter fully, but he saw no objection to holding such a conference.

Government convened a conference in September. The Conference proposed the formation of the Children's Aid Society and appointed a provisional Committee with me as its Hon. Secretary. The Provisional Committee did all the necessary spade

work and its report was placed before the Second Conference held on 17th February, 1927, the Home Member, Hotson, presiding. He announced that the old Umarchadi Jail with the necessary alterations was to be used as a Children's Home to be run by the Children's Aid Society. The Constitution of the Society was adopted and the first donations were announced. Rs. 20,000/- were given by my wife's aunt and Rs. 1,000/- by Sir Victor Sassoon. The first Managing Committee was then appointed with Hotson as Chairman, Miss M. K. Davis as Hon. Secretary and myself as Hon. Treasurer.

The Children's Act was brought into force on 1st May, 1927 and the first batch of children was received at the Umarchadi Home on that day. We started off to a flying start and the first estimates of the children to be admitted and the amount of expenses required were found to be too low.

Mrs. Besant, immediately after returning from England, expressed a desire to visit the Umarchadi Home. In a statement to the Press on 29th October she said :

"On October 28th, Mr. and Mrs. Jinarajadas and myself under the guidance of Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas, the indefatigable worker for the protection of women and children in Bombay, visited the Children's Home in Umarchadi, where the little waifs and strays found in Bombay streets are picked up for some childish naughtiness and are carried off to the first 'home' that they have ever known. They come in frightened and shrinking, wondering what is this new danger that has struck them and presently they find gentle hands touch them, wash them, caress them, while fear changes into wonder and wonder into happy confidence until they look fearlessly with a smile and with bright eyes into the eyes of those strangers, who smile at them with kindly greeting, perhaps with a gentle touch on head or shoulder.

"Boys and girls there are all at ease and happy, learning their lessons, playing at their games just like normal children in happy homes. Yet what a past is behind each of them. Before seeing them, we had looked over the careful registers kept, the story of their brief lives before a kindly fate captured them and set the little feet on a road which leads them to happy and useful citizenship in their Motherland. Little girls rescued from brothels, often infected with disease, little boys without a home, just beginning a life that would lead them into pretty misdeeds,

stealing food since they were hungry and like older people must eat to live. Here is a bright little creature of five, merry as she hugs a wooley bear, dropping it as the teacher asks her to write her name, picking up a slate, borrowing a pencil, sitting down with a solemn face, and in a couple of minutes jumping up and proudly presenting the slate with a neatly written name in Nagri characters. A 'brilliantly clever child' says the teacher with relatives in a town in Madras Presidency and we promise to find an escort to take her to them.

"The building is an old gaol, with a large compound, which is being decorated with gardens by the children; the boys' gardens were the earliest and already plants are growing in them. The boys have dug up a strip of gardens for the girls and they now will begin the planting.

"Over all presides a gentle charming lady, Miss Katherine Davis, who lately wrote a tender pathetic article in 'New India' 'The Children Wonder Why'—the troubled dim mind of the helpless little one. It brought the water to my eyes when I read it. Will not Bombay be father and mother to these rescued lives, make it possible for them to learn a trade and earn an honest living? Are we not taught to 'look on all youngsters as your children'?"

Mrs. Besant gave a donation of Rs. 250/-. Funds began to pour in and work at the Home increased. For ten years, Miss Davis was the Secretary-Superintendent and guardian angel of this Home. Thousands of Children—boys and girls—passed through her hand. Every one of them she knew by name, sight and history. They received their first word of kindness from her.

In May, 1932, I met Lady Willingdon in Simla. She showed a keen interest in the working of the Home and gave me a donation of Rs. 300/- for the Children's Aid Society and later when she passed through Bombay, she visited the Home. Sir Ernest Hotson, the Home Member, took a keen personal interest and made it a point to visit the Home at least once a week.

The Home continued to make quiet and steady progress for ten years. When the Congress Government was formed in 1937, K. M. Munshi as Home Minister, became ex-officio Chairman of the Children's Aid Society. He reorganised and re-vitalised it I took up its Secretaryship in 1938. Munshi made an intensive

study of the problem and his imagination and push gave it a fresh life.

Munshi called a Conference in August, 1938 and after explaining the work under the Children's Act, posed the questions:

(a) Whether our City institutions should not serve only as exchanges for collecting and distributing destitute children and intellectually and morally fit for city life?

(b) Whether it would not be better to keep these children under village conditions round about Bombay rather than put them in narrow stone walls of our city institutions?

(c) Whether it would not be better to evolve a system of village homes in the Province where children could be trained to be village workers?

(d) Whether it is not possible to give these children some kind of social background by giving them uniform cultural training of some kind?

At the second conference held in December, 1938, Munshi gave an idea of what Government proposed to do viz., create more Homes with an agricultural bias.

Speaking on 21st December, 1938 on "Securing Social Justice for Children", Munshi drew a graphic but harrowing picture of the degradations of these "salesmen" in beggary into the moral life of the City. Munshi said: "Beggary in Bombay is an organised business; beggars from all India trade here in search of larger profits. There is a regular beggars' mart in the City in which the blind beggar is the most attractive salesman. Early every morning the organisers of the trade select the places where the blind and the crippled beggars have to stand. But beggary would not be a profitable trade if there were no children to attract the customers' attention. The beggar child, therefore, is the most valuable asset in the trade; and as such is sold, bartered or mortgaged. The ordinary price at which a blind child can be bought is Rs. 5/-, that of a crippled one is Rs. 3/-. Some years ago, I came across the case of a child which had shells put into its eyes to look like blind.

What about the poor child? It is beaten, thrashed, branded into learning the arts of attracting your sympathy. Near the General Post Office a little boy, a short while ago, attracted the generosity of passers-by by piteous importunities. After hours of crying, the boy would get tired, the guardian who sat a little farther



away branded the child's hand by a lighted *bidi* whenever the child's strength to whine failed. The man was caught red-handed and then when examined confessed that for months together every day when its voice failed it was treated with the stimulant of being branded.

On one day at the Children's Aid Society, the deaf and dumb boy spoke, the blind one saw and the lame one jumped; a miracle which the prophets of old could envy!

By our self-complacent generosity, we only encourage the most wicked form of child slave-traffic. You think you have paid in charity; to relieve agony of a poor child; in truth you have only allowed yourself to be decoyed into paying a price by a clever salesman by adopting the device of offering you a tempting article, the helpless child. Then again take another form of child slavery. There are children—boys and girls—employed in brothels as menial servants. Throughout the night they fetch things from the Irani shops to their employers and only when the Vigilance Branch of the Bombay City Police raids a brothel that such children are reclaimed from the life of drudgery and vice to which they have been consigned.

Another form of child trade in the City is that of the "Cham-piwallas—the professional masseurs. Most of the boys satisfy the homosexual instincts of the underworld. They ply their trade after midnight—these poor little victims of homosexuality and venereal disease.

There is another form of shocking child slavery in Bombay. Tender girls or boys from Goa, Mangalore and some other South Indian towns are imported into Bombay. Their age is sometimes seven and are employed on a salary of Rs. 2 or 3 per month. The child slaves from early morning till late at night, often the only servant of a large family. It has no friends or relatives. If it fails to carry out any of its numerous duties or gets ill it is punished cruelly often by being scalded with hot water or branded with tongs or live coals and is a victim for the sexual rapacity of male adult in or attached to the master's family. These cases, all from the records of the Children's Aid Society, provide ample material to awaken the drowsiest of moral consciences.

The next point of importance is that the public should be awakened to the fact that every cent given to a professional beg-

gar in the street is the profit that Bombay public pays to a nefarious trade in helpless children. It may be very pleasant for me to throw a coin and feel that a place has been reserved for me in heaven, but my place in heaven has created hell for an innocent child. Unless the public realises this and assists Government in its work of stamping out this traffic, the crime will rest on the shoulders of the so-called generous men and women."

Soon on Government land in Chembur was built an open colony, unlike other Reformatory Schools which were walled. In both lay-out and routine, the Home was designed to minimise the dangers and drawbacks of institutionalism. The 'huts' in units of two constituted a 'hut family', the members of which were the group of 40 or odd boys, the matron and the House Master. The Chembur Children's Home was an experimental Community School, with agricultural bias.

The work was getting on splendidly but the Congress Ministry resigned in November, 1939. The last act of Munshi as Home Minister was the transference of the David Sassoon Industrial Home to the Children's Aid Society; and as the secretary of the Society, I took formal charge of the Home a few minutes before the Ministry gave up its office.

Munshi was doing as Home Minister splendid work and the resignation of the Ministry was not only a political blunder but it also interfered with the progress of social work.

On 30th May, 1939, I gave a talk from the All India Radio, Bombay, on the work, past, present and future, of the Children's Aid Society. I said *inter alia* :

"It was apparent that it would not be possible to treat the destitute or the beggar child all by himself, the adult beggar also has to be brought in. Fortunately we have some data and expert opinion to guide us. In the course of last 20 years and more, no less than four important committees have tried to understand and tackle the beggar problem, but it is rather curious that after 20 years' deliberations the problem is as acute as it was ever, if not much worse. And yet very fine work has been done since the enforcement of the Children Act 12 years ago. The trouble has been that though many attempts have been made to clarify the issue involved in the beggar-problem-difficulty, and there have been frequent discussions in the Municipality and in the Legislative Councils and in the press, every one urges

somebody else to take action and nothing really effective could be done whilst the ranks of beggars have increased owing to the abnormal agricultural, industrial and economic situation and the absence of adequate funds and trained workers for social work. The Municipality looks to Government to move in the matter the public blame the police for inaction, the police complains about the magistracy, the magistracy points out the weakness in the law and refers to the lack of suitable institutions and the short-sighted policy of charitable trusts, which although intended to mitigate the nuisance, too frequently only intensify it. We have to realise that the whole problem cannot be solved by one stroke of the pen, but a start can be made if all the bodies co-operate and are supported by Government and spirited, generous and well-informed public opinion.

The problem is vast and has to be tackled from all angles. I shall first deal with the legislation necessary to tackle it. Certain amount of piecemeal legislation about beggars exists in one form or another. The Indian Leper Act, The Criminal Tribes Act, the Bombay City Police Act; but none of these make beggary completely illegal.

Section 21 of the Police Act is important and reads thus :

“Whoever in any street or public place begs or directs or permits children under his control to beg, or applies for alms or exposes or exhibits with the object of obtaining or extorting alms, any sores, wound, deformity or disease, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month or with fine which may extend to fifty rupees or with both”.

And yet in spite of this section, how many hundreds and thousands of beggars, adults and juvenile, do we not find in the streets of Bombay?

Take the Leper Act. Whilst there is provision in the legislation for the compulsory rounding up of lepers, there is not proper and adequate precaution to prevent the escape of statutory lepers from the Ackworth Leper Asylum, with the result that all police efforts to collect the lepers from the city and take them to the leper asylum are a waste of time and energy and money in as much as these lepers after a few days' feeding and rest, leave the asylum to continue their old and better paying profession of begging in the streets.

If, therefore, the problem has to be tackled in a satisfactory manner, a comprehensive Beggars' Act must be passed providing for a Beggar Court, Beggar Remand Home and a Beggar Camp (a) for helpless, crippled, diseased and old beggars, (b) for able bodied beggars. We cannot lose sight of the fact that we have in India an unfortunate system of religious mendicant beggars and of hereditary beggars and their problem has to be handled differently. Experts consider it unwise to separate the begging children from their begging parents and families and they suggest that proper provision must be made for housing them separately. All these could be provided for in the new Beggars Act.

Under the Bombay Children Act of 1924 direct attempts are made to prevent child beggary by the arrest of destitute children, to penalise adult exploitation of begging children and to provide for right treatment of child beggars as young offenders. The scope of the Children Act is thus fairly wide. Since its enforcement in 1927, over 12,000 boys and girls have passed through the Umarkhadi Children's Home. When the Home was first started in May, 1927, the financial budget was estimated on the basis of having 25 children in the Home, but in the very first month, we had no less than 130 children in the Home and today total number of inmates at Umarkhadi is roughly 350. About two or three years ago, it was realised that all the preventive and constructive work organised by the Children's Aid Society and sister organisations like the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Home and the David Sassoon Industrial Home would come to a standstill because of the paucity of institutional accommodation in the City and outside. All the existing Homes, orphanages and certified schools were chokeful, and cases before the Juvenile Court remained pending, as the Magistrate had no place or institution where the children could be committed. The police had to slow up their enthusiasm and their efforts in spite of the existing legislation, they had to let begging, destitute children mix freely and roam about with adult beggar and *mawalies*.

Further, it was realised that the Children Act dealt only with children upto the age of 16, that is to say, that boys and girls who had probably their first chance in life, when they entered the compound of the Umarkhadi Children's Home, had to be let loose unprotected and unprovided for in an unkind world of

poverty, temptation and victimization with nothing but starvation facing them or in the alternative taking to begging, thieving or living an immoral life as a profession. Surely, this state of affairs needed immediate grappling with. The third problem that experience brought to our notice was that all the institutions were in the City. The expenses of a city institution and the children brought up in a city atmosphere getting city-minded and getting city habits are far more than the expenses of an ordinary life in a village from where mostly the children come.

Mr. Munshi, therefore, realising the responsibility of Government convened two or three conferences and brought to their notice the critical stage our social problems had reached and emphasized the need of whole-hearted and intelligent co-operation of all those concerned in social welfare.

Government have given free of charge 130 acres of land at Chembur for the accommodation of about 1,000 children, 60 village homes, each accommodating 16 children and their supervisor, will be built on the village lines; 50 will be for boys and 10, to start with, for girls and more will be built as and when required. Already 28 such homes are almost ready for occupation and within a month or so, what was a jungle and forest will be a happy playground—an educational institute for no less than 300 boys. Government have provided for a non-recurring grant of Rs. 2,00,000/- for the buildings at Chembur and a recurring annual grant of Rs. 85,000/- to meet the day-to-day expenditure. What a fine example to follow! We have now asked the Bombay Municipality to shoulder its share of responsibility in this matter.

We want more money from the general public. Our need is great, very great. We have well thought out, well-planned schemes for 3 school buildings for boys, one school building for girls and 2 workshops, hospital with two wards of 25 beds each fully equipped, 6 village colonies consisting of 12 to 15 grown up boys with equipment, etc., playground for 1,000 children with equipment and buildings for stores, office, servants' quarter etc., etc. Will you call this ambitious schemes? Perhaps. But it is a scheme which will not remain merely a dream. Those who had seen the land at Chembur only three months ago and those who see it now, will realise how beautifully dreams come true. It is almost a miracle. When most of these buildings are ready, proper

vocational training will be given to the children to turn them out not as better equipped city loafers but as useful craftsmen and as reliable workers in hard village up-lift work. The vocations already in mind are spinning, carding and weaving on hand and powerlooms, carpentry, agriculture, dairying, shoe-making, tailoring, washing and masonry. There will be scope for all these as the number of boys and girls to be dealt with will run into four figures.

The hospital and the dispensary will be one of the most important parts of the new scheme. How many people realise that a good percentage of the under-nourished boys and girls who come to Umarkhadi—brought either from the streets or from places of moral danger like brothels, etc.—boys and girls, most of them under 12 years have bad skin and venereal diseases, victims of man's lust, cruelty and greed. No less than two years' patient and continuous treatment brings them back to healthy physical life which reacts equally favourably on their mental and moral development. Our experience is that these shattered young souls, shattered in body, mind and emotion, soon respond to kindly medical and humane treatment and get back to normal.

Last but not the least is the problem of the mentally deficient children. There has never been a proper enquiry to find out the incidence of mental deficiency in the country. According to Dr. Pacheco, Assistant Superintendent of the Ranchi Mental Hospital, there are over 2 million mentally deficient adults and children in India totally uncared for. This problem should be tackled on an all-India basis. The Government of India who should tackle this problem must appoint an All-India Committee of enquiry in order that valuable statistical information may be collected. An Indian Mental Deficiency Act on the lines of the English Act of 1913 must be passed; and certified Institutes operating under a Board of Control must be established. Laboratory for research in juvenile delinquency and an observation centre for studying the psychology of the Indian children by Indian psychiatrists will have to be provided for. A home specially meant for the mentally deficient children will be built few hard facts. Is it in the interests of the country or humanity that the mentally deficient men and women should be allowed to procreate? Would it be a very shocking suggestion if I say that the new legislation should permit the mentally deficient

children to be made permanently sterile. Those who have like me seen for years scores of mentally deficient boys and girls and their utter helplessness in looking after themselves will wholeheartedly agree with my suggestion.

These are our schemes and our dreams which will bear fruit at no distant date. But Government cannot alone cope with this problem. The general public must co-operate, co-operation by intelligently understanding the problem, co-operation by fighting harmful practices indulged on wholesale basis, of misdirected charity and alms giving. Not only this kind of misplaced charity not helps the eradication of the evil but it only aggravates it. Calculating on a very moderate basis, in Bombay City alone there are no less than 60 or 70 institutions with endowments of Rs. 35 to 40 lakhs of Hindu Charities. The 6 'Sadavarthas' in the Bombay City are stated to be spending Rs. 50,000 annually in the provision for free meals. This kind of charity does great harm to the country. It sets a premium on laziness and breeds *mawalis*. There is sufficient wisdom and foresight and true religious spirit in the Hindu community and I have no doubt that if proper approach is made, these charities could be diverted to more deserving and useful purposes. The solution of the problem should not be delayed on score of financial stringency. Remember that in this problem, we are out to work for and help those of our younger brothers and sisters, those unfortunates, who cannot help themselves, and remember the words of the Great Christ "For as much as ye have done it to the least of those my brethren, ye have done it unto Me".

Sir Roger Lumley, the Governor, who was the President of the Children Aid Society, took a keen and personal interest in its working. He, as the Governor of Bombay under Section 93, gave the Society a grant of Rs. 80,000/- and a Home for the Mentally Deficient Children was built.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### INFANT MORTALITY, BIRTH CONTROL, AND NATIONAL BABY WEEK

A TERRIBLE calamity in the shape of the severest epidemic of influenza befell India in September, 1918 and Bombay, with all its slums, was one of its worst victims. This was three weeks after the exhaustive Special Session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay in August, 1918.

For a period of about three months the daily mortality was between 700 and 800. Within one or two days of the patient getting influenza he just died. There was no chance of saving his life. The infant mortality during 1918 as a result of this epidemic was over 750, that is 750 children out of 1,000 born during that year died within their first year. It was because of this epidemic which was naturally worse in the mill area due to the lower powers of resistance of the working classes on account of poverty, under nourishment and bad working and housing conditions that my attention was drawn to the squalor and misery in the Bombay slums.

During my visits to the mill area I came face to face with hard facts of life, with human miseries never experienced or dreamt of before. Today when I remember some of the sights which I then witnessed, I shudder with horror and indignation that such things should exist and be permitted to exist. What squalor, what misery, what intolerable suffering, what ignorance, what helplessness! It makes one feel sick when one realises that all these were—and are—preventible if decency, sympathy and friendliness, consideration, understanding and organised effort prevailed.

The worst sufferers were the women workers and the women of the labouring classes whose reserve powers of resistance were far too meagre due to bad housing conditions, insufficient and bad food and poverty and inability to get any medical assistance.



But their courage and fortitude were in complete contrast with the meagreness of their resources.

The Infant Welfare Society tried to fill in the gap by opening milk centres, post-natal and ante-natal clinics and health visitors and nurses to help women see through their maternity period. But there were far too few maternity homes in the City. In view of this paucity, I asked a question in the Bombay Legislative Council :

“(a) Will the Government be pleased to state if it is a fact that a Welfare Centre under the Lady Lloyd Scheme has been opened and is working at the Worli Development Chawls?

“(b) With a view to bringing medical relief right into the homes of the working classes, will the Government be pleased to state if it is their intention to consider favourably any application to start a free maternity home in the Development Chawls?”

Sir Cowasji Jehangir's answer was satisfactory and it was immediately followed up by the Infant Welfare Society starting a small maternity home in the Development Department Chawls in spite of the strong active opposition of the Municipal Health Authorities. The Maternity Homes at DeLisle Road and Worli Chawls brought medical aid to the very doors of the working classes.

The National Baby Week was started in 1924 and I was its Hon. Secretary for four years. Its main objectives were to popularise maternity homes, Child Welfare Centres, to make efforts to reduce infant mortality and cleanliness in the chawls. Efforts were made to educate the working classes on the need of limitation of families by “birth control”. A cinema picture was made of M. Brieux's “Damaged Goods” with the necessary adaptations to suit Indian conditions and I acted the part of the doctor.

From 1926 to 1928, I was the Secretary of the Infant Welfare Society. We realised then the need for limiting the population of India and in 1928 I moved a Resolution in the Municipal Corporation for providing in the Municipal Medical Dispensaries and Clinics facilities for artificial birth control. My speech was ridiculed and laughed at and my resolution fell through for want of a seconder!

Only after independence was achieved in 1947, India and

its leaders became conscious of the tremendous growth of population, making more acute and more difficult the three major problems with which India has to cope and which should receive top priorities—food, housing and unemployment. It was only when Independent India, free from foreign shackles, had to tackle her internal problems that she realised the importance of these three vital subjects. During the twenties, thirties and the first half of the forties, too much attention was concentrated on the solution of the political question *vis-a-vis* foreign rule. Social and educational problems were neglected.

When on 1st August, 1947, Lord Mountbatten asked Pandit Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel if they realised that within fifteen days they were to take over the administration of India and if they had started thinking in terms of what gigantic problems they had to face, Nehru and Patel replied that they knew what they would do and that they were not worried about it. The comment was that they were suffering from the courage and confidence of ignorance.

And so, neglect, cock-sureness, quack methods of the cow-dung age, belief in existence of an easy solution for every problem based on “make-believism” are responsible for the serious difficulties India is facing today. The Union Cabinet Ministers, beginning with Prime Minister Nehru talk of family planning but fight shy of the more correct and more significant words like “birth control”. But no action or hardly any action was taken to face the problem of population squarely.

Much worse was the attitude of Gandhiji over this problem of population. He definitely opposed birth control. Instead he suggested self-control and celibacy! His followers, afraid of losing their popularity by openly avowing views contrary to what Gandhiji propounded, kept quiet. The result has been the tremendous growth of population. But some of us at least did not accept Gandhiji's philosophy or ideology.

On 13th November, 1927, I gave oral evidence before the Indian Cinematograph Committee with Sir V. T. Krishnamachari, former Dewan of Baroda and till lately Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission, as its Chairman. The following questions and answers refer to the propaganda of birth-control.

Q: Now, when you come down to religious questions, are you not in favour of considerable freedom of treatment of reli-

gious subjects?

A: I think that religious susceptibilities are intensified by giving undue prominence to them.

Q: For what purpose would you allow that freedom to the cinemas?

A: For the removal of social abuses. We had the film "The Slaves of Customs". It was definitely against child marriage, and I have suggested that Municipal and Government funds should be used for making more films through the agency of an unofficial organisation for the prevention of social abuses. For the moment, to give an example, the crying need is of birth control. I should certainly advocate birth-control in films not only by stories, but I would even go to the extent of screening the methods by which birth control should be encouraged.

The basic philosophy underlying family planning is planning for the size of the family and not merely the stopping of further births. A large reduction of further births is a "must" for India. Contraceptives can ensure the spacing of the intervals between the birth of one child and the next as well as limitation after the wanted or desirable number is reached. In the last 300 years, world population has doubled twice and today stands at 2,800 million with a prospective increase to 7,000 million by the end of the twentieth century.

In India our total population was over 430 million when the Third Five Year Plan started and by the beginning of the Fourth Five Year Plan, it will be about 480 millions (48 crores). The expectation of life which was 32 in 1951 would be 50 years in 1966.

The Planning Commission in the Third Five Year Plan has emphatically stated: "The objective of stabilising the population has certainly to be regarded as an essential element in the strategy of development". Population control and family planning have been a part of Government's policy since the First Five Year Plan was published, but how far has that policy received practical attention?

The Union Health Ministry in its progress report up to July, 1960 states that 292 districts in India have some family planning services, the number of clinics being 1349 of which 866 are rural. Out of more than 4,000 maternity and child health

centres, 1318 are giving family planning advice. This is not even a flea-bite as compared with the actual requirements.

Under the Third Plan, the target is for 2076 urban and 6121 rural centres. This too is far too inadequate to make any appreciable reduction in the incidence of population growth.

The majority of these proposed clinics would be a part of the primary health centres, hospitals and maternity and child health centres, so that they could be integrated with the health and medical services. It has been estimated that about 70 lakhs of people have been contacted in varying degrees through educational propaganda and about 70 lakhs have received actual contraceptive advice. The off-take of contraceptives has increased since 1956 and the number of sterilisations has gone up, particularly in the States of Maharashtra and Madras. But then the question is what about the other States? The service organisation is steady at an unsatisfactorily slow pace. The results achieved so far can only be described as a preparatory elementary stage!

Two American Experts, Dr. Coale and Dr. Hoover have stated in their authoritative study on the Indian population problem:

"A major decline in birth rate may be assumed only if the Government undertakes an unprecedented, nationwide programme designed to introduce family limitations into every Indian village. There are many formidable problems: of finding the best methods of communicating widely both the advantage of family limitations and elementary facts about the physiology of reproduction; of discovering means of birth control that are at once acceptable to the Indian population, simple to use, effective, low in cost and easy to store; and of ascertaining a feasible way of incorporating family planning in the other elements of the programme for Indian development".

Birth control is essentially an active programme where the millions would have to adopt actively its practice, weaving it into their philosophy and attitude towards marriage and the family. It is not a measure that Government or any other powerful agency can provide to the people (except in the limited though important sphere of clinic service); it is something that must become a part of the fabric of society. But how can this be achieved quickly in the face of the colossal ignor-

ance of the people and particularly women. The illiteracy percentage of women in India is over 90. In Bombay State, the illiteracy percentage is 98.

The chief problem today is, therefore, of communication and motivation—to impart this new knowledge to the people, and to create a strong motivation in them to adopt the practice in their own lives, and that too within the shortest period of time. The Planning Commission has recognised this fact, for among the points needing special emphasis, it places first in the list the need for “widespread education to create the necessary social background for a large family planning programme”.

In pointing out the difficulties of reaching the people, I do not want to run down the gallant efforts made by the voluntary agencies in full co-operation with the Government machinery. But one has to face stark facts and that might help to achieve the desired results in a matter of 30 to 50 years. It is going to be a long, long struggle against ignorance and superstition.

The one problem which we have to face is of finding a cheap, effective and harmless contraceptive. Not being a medical man, I am not competent to deal with this question of effective contraceptive methods. Oral treatment seems likely to be effective. But the other methods so far recommended are not fool-proof and anything may happen and does happen. Cheap contraceptive methods are the order of the day but they do not so far give hundred per cent successful results.

The Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966) contains a provision of Rs. 27 crores for the family planning programme. This is five times as much as was provided for in the Second Plan but in terms of the total outlay of the Third Plan, comes to hardly 0.25 per cent of the expenditure.

Speaking in Dallas, Texas (U.S.A.), Mr. M. C. Chagla, now Union Education Minister and then India's Ambassador in U.S.A. said:

“Americans cannot remain neutral on the problem of birth control. The population explosion can do much worse than the nuclear bomb. It can destroy the soul and degrade the dignity of the human being. I want you to imagine.....what it means for millions of children to be born

in under-developed countries, children who will suffer from malnutrition, who have no proper homes to live in, who may have no employment when they grew up, and who may spend their lives as.....dissatisfied and bitter human beings, prey to any new idea which might promise them better prospects and more tolerable conditions.....I wish to appeal to the American people seriously to think about this matter and to make it a national issue.

"I think what we really need in India is an oral contraceptive. It should be so cheap that it would be possible to sell these pills as widely as quinine or aspirin is sold in India today."

I am a born optimist but I do not feel too cheerful about the success of India's national policy to propagate birth control giving any appreciable results right till after the end of the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE INDIAN CINEMATOGRAPH COMMITTEE

ON Sunday, 13th November, 1927, I gave oral evidence before the Indian Cinematograph Committee. Sir V. T. Krishnamachari was the Chairman and among the other Members of the Committee were K. C. Neogy, Coatsman, Director of Information, Government of India, Col. Crawford, representing British Commercial interests and A. M. Green, I.C.S., Collector of Customs, Bombay. It was first intended that I should appear before this Committee as a representative of the Bombay Vigilance Association. But a few days before the Committee arrived in Bombay, the Home Secretary, Government of Bombay, told me that the Committee had expressed a desire to have me as an independent witness, as a public man, rather than be limited in my answers as a representative of the Bombay Vigilance Association. I agreed and the following are some of the answers I gave to the Committee's questionnaire:

"I can speak from first hand personal knowledge and experience of the three Indian films produced by the National Baby Week of which I was the Secretary 'Save the Baby', 'The Slaves of Customs' (regarding Child Marriages) and 'The Curse of Ignorance' (against venereal disease). The last is an adaptation of M. Brioux's 'Damaged Goods'. I myself took a part in the acting. The scenario was discussed in the minutest details by a sub-committee of social workers and the film was taken under the supervision and direction of Lady Cawasji Jehangir (Jr.)."

"I am very strongly in favour of an increased use of the cinema for educational purposes in schools and for adult education in agriculture, public health, etc., by Government, Municipality or preferably with financial help from Government or Municipal funds or by non-official social organizations (like the Social Service League, the Infant Welfare Society or the Baby Week Organisation). These would be most useful and interest-

ing and I can say this from my personal experience. It would give employment to thousands of educated and illiterate Indians, and thus help in reducing unemployment. It would raise the moral and artistic tastes of the people, if properly handled. It would give a healthy leisure-hour occupation to people. It would take people away from the grog-shop. To the question referring to the need of creation of a centralised distributing agency and the creation of a State agency for undertaking the management of the film industry as a monopoly, I answered: "I am not in favour of the proposal when the Government is neither responsible nor responsive to popular opinion. Such an agency would be suspect".

Regarding preference for British films, I said:

"I am opposed to giving preference to British Empire films. Both on principle and its practical adaptation, such preference would not assist in the development of India's film industry."

"The cinema pictures could and should be used to a very great extent in making known the conditions, resources and habits of the people and the activities of the various Governments not only of the Governments of the British Commonwealth but also of other advanced nations of the world. The cinema should also be used to foil the attempts of the enemies of India, who have no scruples in dishonestly misrepresenting Indian culture and conditions and habits of the people of India."

As regards harmful effects of some films I answered:

"Films containing undesirable features would have an injurious effect on the public, more especially on the youth of both sexes such as,

"(1) Women insufficiently clothed or in the nude, wherein special care is taken to draw attention to the insufficiency of clothing;

"(2) Men and women in indecent postures which suggest sexual desires and have the effect of stimulating sexual desires in the more impressionable of the audiences;

"(3) Scenes of wild orgies and revelry;

"(4) Scenes which violently shake and upset the emotions;

"(5) Scenes of violence and torture.

"What are known as 'sex' and 'Crime' films are harmful. Some suggestive films radiate thought—forms of sexual desire



and would imbalance many a young person who otherwise is fighting his lower nature.

"There are certainly differences in social customs and outlook between the East and the West but they do not require special consideration at the hands of the Censors.

"In trying to guard against offending religious susceptibilities of any class of the community, care should be taken not to create and feed "religious" susceptibilities".

"It would be necessary to certify certain films as 'for adults only' e.g. the Baby Week film 'The Curse of Ignorance' should not be shown to children.

"I am not in favour of prohibiting all children below a certain age from visiting cinemas".

"A stricter control is necessary over the import of films: Some years ago, foreign films of an unmentionably obscene type were imported into Bombay. Also some obscene films were locally made. And all these were shown at one of the Bombay Cinemas—apart from more private shows at private residences—where admission was by special invitation."

My oral examination lasted about two and a half hours. It turned out to be mainly political and Coatman and Col. Crawford did not cherish my evidence as their apple-cart of British Imperial preference was upset by my answers. They put me through a searching cross-examination. The Chairman, Sir V. T. Krishnamachari; so also Neogy, were friendly and helpful; and I think they appreciated and enjoyed my frank answers. The Chairman made it clear from his very first questions why I was asked to give evidence in my personal capacity. He wanted my answers as a "public man and a politician". I agreed that expenditure of public money for encouraging the growth of Indian Film Industry was justifiable.

Explaining my objection to Br. Imperial Preference, I said:

"Even if we may come to some terms with the British Government and its interests on this point, whether the word is spoken or written, I think that word would not be kept when it conflicts with British interests. The Government of India and the Government at Home would always treat this as scrap of paper and they will have no scruples in protecting their own against the Indian Industry."

Coatman did not like my answers and asked for facts. I

said the facts were outside the cinema industry of course. I exclaimed: "Look at the history of India during the last six years and the way in which the Government are breaking word after word, promise after promise."

The Chairman intervened:

"As you are a politician, I want to know the view-point of Indian politicians on this subject. You are almost the first prominent man who has come before this Committee and therefore I want your considered opinion on this point, what the politically-minded people of India feel in this matter. The Chairman asked me if the fear I had expressed was generally entertained. I answered "Yes. There are two different points in which I can answer this question. I have said both on principle and because of difficulty of practical adaptation. I had in mind, I added, that we could not have British preference through the back door as Lala Lajpatrai says. The whole question is a question to be decided by India as a whole and Great Britain as a whole, and unless our political problems are solved, questions of self-Government and other things, we are not prepared to come to terms with Great Britain. We are called a partner in the British Commonwealth as many times as it suits Great Britain. As long as the political and economic exploitation of this country continues, I cannot come to terms with Great Britain. It hurts our self-respect and secondly Britain will always get the better of us because of the position she holds.

The Chairman asked: So long as we belong to the Empire, do you think this policy of distrusting each other can conduce to our benefit?"

I answered: "Facts are facts"

The Chairman said that he was glad that I was frank and added that it was just as well for the Government to know what the Indian people thought and that his object in these questions was that of getting at my mind.

In reply to the Chairman's question as to the desirability of entering into a reciprocal arrangement with the other partners of the British Commonwealth, I said that any such that could be got at between the different members of the Empire without Great Britain's interference, I would certainly welcome.

I added: "India is more hurt by the partners of the British Empire than by any other nation of the world."

Chairman: Do you not think that the Cinema will be a good means of educating our fellow citizens in the Empire in the conditions of the country? I may put it to you from a political point of view, because I want to discuss with you what strikes my mind, do not think it is my conclusion. I am sure the newspapers will rate me for this. I want to have a frank talk with you on this side of the question. Well, even politically, for instance you all say India is ground down in poverty and the rest of the Empire believes that India is well ruled by the British Government. If you open the eyes of the other parts of the Empire to the real conditions in India don't you think they will co-operate with you or alleviate your condition?

A: I don't think they can do much to alleviate the conditions of India. But to return to the point you suggested a few minutes ago, if the whole control were to be in the hands say of a select Committee of Indian elected members of the Assembly then to some extent I would not mind. If leaders of public opinion like Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, you or Mr. Jinnah and half a dozen others whom I could easily name, like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Motilal Nehru, etc., if they fall in with this, I should have no objection.

Asked if I could give any particular kind of thing that I would like to be toned down, I answered: "I don't mind kissing and embracing. I don't mind even the insufficient clothing, but what I object to is that some of the things are very suggestive and make themselves very vulgar. I am opposed to vulgarity and obscenity".

Mr. Neogy asked: "I take it that your attitude is that we should not decide the question of a reciprocity scheme which is another name for Imperial Preference in the case of the film industry without bringing up the whole question of Imperial Preference for discussion and adoption. I said that was my own feeling.

Regarding showing of obscene films, I asked questions in the Bombay Legislative Council. Two such films were imported and two were made in Bombay.

I read in the Assembly debates that there were films shown out of India in which India was misrepresented. I said such misrepresentation should be stopped by Government, just as one would expect a really good and decent Government to take

steps to stop the misrepresentations in Miss Mayo's book. On the contrary, we are told that Miss Mayo had more than indirect help from the Government of India. You will see that is our difficulty. Where generally one would look to the State for protection against misrepresentation and injury, here the state is interested some time in misrepresentation.

I said that from the trade point of view it would pay certain countries to produce films of agricultural interest for exhibition in India, which might result in the creation of a market for certain implements such as labour saving devices, fertilisers, etc.

I am an absolute Internationalist and would like to promote better relationship not only between the different parts of the British Empire but in the whole world.

Neogi asked: "Your suspicion — I believe that expression has been used by Col. Crawford—about the practical result of the adoption of any such reciprocity scheme is based upon the fact that, as we have been anxious to secure equality in so many other aspects and as we are not getting it; when this question of cinema alone is brought up for bringing about equality and reciprocity and better understanding, you were naturally suspicious about the real motive. Is that your position?"

I replied: "For example, for the meetings of the League of Nations, a Britisher is appointed a representative of India. Recently at the Naval Conference, a man who knows nothing about India has been made to represent India, I mean the First Lord of Admiralty. It is absurd; the whole thing is a huge joke.

Q.: You spoke of the freedom of the West as not being misunderstood largely in India, but you are one of those who advocate such social freedom, is it not?

A.: I go much farther than most of my Indian friends and I would certainly desire more freedom.

I think that religious susceptibilities are intensified by giving undue prominence to them. I would allow full freedom to the cinema for removing social abuses. We had the film "The Slaves of Custom". It was definitely against child marriage and I have suggested that Municipal and Government funds should be used for making more films through the agency of an unofficial organisation for the prevention of social abuses.

For the moment, to give an example, the crying need is of birth control in films not only by stories but I would even go to the extent of screening the methods by which birth control should be encouraged. Col. Crawford asked: Has it ever struck you that the British Commonwealth, including India, is a League of Nations itself?

A.: It is. That is why I am in favour of maintaining British connections and friendly relations with every part of the British Empire as an equal partner. If I thought that India should get out of the Empire, I should work against it. But I believe, it is in the interests of India, of Great Britain and of the world that we should remain together until it becomes a real League of Nations,

I was then examined in camera in regard to my statement in the Bombay Legislative Council and in my evidence re: manufacture and circulation of obscene films.

The Chairman thanked me for my evidence and added: "You have been very candid and we admire it".

Next evening — 14th November — I was with Jinnah in his Chambers at the High Court discussing details of the boycott of the Simon Commission. Coatman dropped in just then and as Jinnah tried to introduce me to him, Coatman said: "I met Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas yesterday when he gave evidence before the Cinematograph Committee. His evidence was awful and Mr. Kanji gave me a bad time".

## CHAPTER XX

### AGE OF CONSENT COMMITTEE

In June, 1928, the Government of India appointed a Committee to enquire and report about the law regarding 'Age of Consent' as contained in Sections 375 and 376, Indian Penal Code. Sir Moropant Joshi of Nagpur was the Chairman of this Committee. Among the members of the Committee were,

Sir Ramaswami Mudahar,  
Mrs. Brij Lal Nehru,  
Pandit Thakurdas Bhargava and  
Mia Mohamed Shah Nawaz.

I gave written and oral evidence before this Committee in August, 1928. The following are some of the replies given by me to the Questionnaire :

**Q:** Is there any dissatisfaction with the state of the laws as to the age of consent as contained in Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code?

**A:** There is very great dissatisfaction with the state of law as to the age of consent as contained in Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code. This dissatisfaction can be seen in the speeches of the Indian members of the Legislative Assembly when the Bill was discussed in 1925. Even in 1891, there was a large section of the public, who felt that age of 12 was too low.

**Q:** Are the crimes of seduction or rape frequent in your part of the country? Has the amendment of the law made in 1928 raising the age of consent to 14 years succeeded in preventing or reducing cases of rape outside the marital state, or the improper seduction of girls for immoral purposes? If not, what measures would you propose to make the law effective?

**A:** The amendment of the law raising the age of consent from

12 to 14 was only playing with reforms, and Government, as shown by the speech of the British Home Member, were not anxious to deal seriously with the problem. It was not expected, therefore, that the 1925 amendment raising the age to 14 would succeed in preventing cases of rape outside the marital case, or the improper seduction of girls for immoral purposes.

To make the law effective, the age of consent should be raised for non-marital cases. That by itself would not be enough: For, so long as the system of brothel is allowed to go unchecked by the foreign British Government in India, their existence in the country is a direct incentive to traffic in women and girls, and leads to seduction, rape, kidnapping and other similar offences. Indian public opinion has expressed itself strongly in Bombay, for example, but the Government have so far not responded to the public opinion. It would not be enough merely to raise the age of consent for non-marital cases to 18; not only should the age of consent for married girls be raised to 16 or 17, but child-marriages under that age should be forbidden by law.

**Q:** Do you attribute the practice of the early consummation of marriage before or at puberty, wherever it exists, to religious injunctions? If so, what is the authority for and nature of that injunction, and does that authority prescribe any, and what penalty for its breach?

**A:** The opponents of reform—the orthodox and the conservative—try to scare away reformers by bringing forward the bogey of “religious injunction”. The main objection of anti-deluvian “yesterdays” of the orthodox party against reform is supposed to be based on religious grounds. Speaking on “Child Marriage and its Results” in 1913 (“Wake Up, India” by Annie Besant, published by the Theosophical Publishing House), Dr. Besant rightly urged that “where any supposed sacred writing comes in conflict with the Law of God as written in nature itself then the writing must give way to the natural law and the voice of God in Nature must be followed rather than the assumption of that voice in writing obviously subject to interpre-

tation of forgery and to the other changes that all writings go through in the course of ages."

This argument, I submit, is enough for all reasonable and right-minded people, anxious to make all reforms in the light of experience and the needs of the age in which we are living even if there was any basis of truth in the objection based on religion. But even from the point of view of religion, the orthodox party is entirely wrong. Let me refer them "to the times of our greatest literature, the times from which the Upanishads came down, the times when the great Darshanas were thought out, the times, later, of splendid historical writings; of epic, poetry and still later of drama" (Dr. Besant). Women then were the equals of men, trained and cultivated and educated to the highest point.

So far as I know, no penalty is prescribed for non-consummation of marriage before or after puberty, except the penalty prescribed by an ignorant and corrupt priestcraft to impose upon the superstitious, the ignorant and the foolish.

**Q:** Do you consider that the attainment of puberty is a sufficient indication of physical maturity to justify consummation of marriage? If not, at what age and how long after puberty, may a girl's physical development be considered to be enough to justify such consummation without injury to her own health and that of her progeny?

**A:** It is a mistake to assume that the attainment of puberty is a sufficient indication of physical maturity to justify consummation of marriage. Generally for at least 2 years after her first monthly sickness, a girl is not strong enough to stand the strain—physical and emotional—of sexual intercourse. Even then I am afraid that would mean—though not always perceptible—injury to her own health and that of her progeny—and what is equally bad, the mind stops developing by such early consummation. The strain on the emotions also often ends in nervous breakdown.

**Q:** At what age would a girl in India be competent to give an intelligent consent to cohabitation with a due realisation of consequences?

**A:** A girl in India would not be competent to give an intelligent consent to cohabitation with a due realisation of conse-



quences till she is 17 years of age. On questions like this, I can speak with much greater knowledge, and therefore authority than old pillars of orthodoxy, whose arrogant claim for being the true preservers of old traditions is based on pride, prejudice and privilege, or heads of religious sects, whose ignorance and superstitious beliefs we would ignore and laugh at, but for the tragic results they entail. They are not in touch with, and therefore know nothing about the feelings of the younger generation. They are out of touch with all modern conceptions of life, and they do not realise the injury they are inflicting on humanity in general and India in particular, by obstinately clinging to old traditions, just because they are old traditions.

**Q:** Has there been any further development of public opinion in your part of the country in favour of an extension of the age of consent in marital and extra-marital cases since the amendment of the law in 1925? If so, is it general or confined only to certain classes?

**A:** There has been further development of public opinion in favour of an extension of the age of consent in marital and extra-marital cases since the amendment of the law in 1925. It is general and not confined to certain classes only. I should further point out that there is a feeling—not without justification—of despair that nothing can be expected from the present Government which is not only not sympathetic but disregarding or out of touch with all the best elements of the country.

**Q:** Do women in your part of the country favour early consummation of marriage of their children?

**A:** Women do not favour early consummation of marriage for their children.

**Q:** Would you make a difference in the procedure of trials for offences within and without the marital state and if so, what would you suggest in each case?

**A:** I suggest that the trials for offences within and without the marital state should be held *in camera* if possible and the names of the victims should not be disclosed, just as in black mail cases in England, the victim's name is not disclosed. If this safeguard is not introduced, there would be difficulties in bringing such cases to court, because of the

permanent harm done to the unfortunate victims. •

**Q:** Do you consider that penal legislation fixing a higher age of consent for marital cases is likely to be more effective than legislation fixing the minimum age of marriage? Which of the two alternatives would be in consonance with public opinion in your part of the country?

**A:** It would be necessary both to have penal legislation fixing higher age of consent as well as legislation fixing the minimum age of marriage. In Bombay, public opinion would back up both of these provisions.

**Q:** Would you prefer to rely on the strengthening of the penal law to secure the object in view or on the progress of social reform by means of education and social propaganda?

**A:** It would not do merely to rely on the progress of social reform by means of education and social propaganda to secure the object in view. These must be backed by legislation, for such legislation in itself is a form of propaganda. As Dicey says, "Law fosters and creates law-making opinion..... A principle derives prestige by mere recognition by Parliament..... The true importance of law lies far less in the direct result than in their effect upon the sentiment or convictions of the public."

I have considered necessary to give in these last five chapters—Chapters XVI to XX—the story of my work and activities in the social field in the Twenties because it is a background of the events of the Twenties—the formative years of nation-building after the First World War. Gandhiji and his friends took no part in such work and these activities went over their heads.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SWARAJ PARTY AND COUNCIL ENTRY

THE imprisonment of Gandhiji in March, 1922, though it solved for the moment the problem of law and order, did not decrease the difficulties which Reading and his Government were experiencing in the administrative and financial fields. The new Legislatures both in the Centre and the Provinces had worked well. Government were anxious to placate the Reforms and co-operated fully with the non-official Indian majorities in the Centre and the Provinces. I am saying this from my personal knowledge and experience of the Bombay Legislative Council. The Executive wing of the Government, dealing with Reserved subjects as also its Ministerial counterpart were functioning as if no dyarchy existed and the Reserved subjects were not treated as the exclusive compartment of the Bureaucracy. This was natural because the Indian Executive Councillors were Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola and Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, and Cowasji Jehangir, all well-known and experienced nationalists. Equally strong was the Ministerial wing consisting of Sir Chunilal V. Mehta, Dr. R. P. Paranjpye and Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah. There was team work in Lloyd's Government between the Members and the Ministers.

But the financial stringency caused great anxiety. Reading went as far as to suggest to the Home Government the reduction in the military expenditure. But the Home Government turned these proposals down. Reading then appointed a Retrenchment Committee presided over by Lord Inchcape and among the other able members of the Committee were Lord Catto, Purshottamdas Thakurdas and Dadiba Merwanjee Dalal. Reading also doubled the Salt Tax. Reading's determination to achieve justice both as between the different Governmental interests and for the people of India went far to allay anxiety and deaden the pain of the inevitable surgical operation on India's

finances.

The whole cry in India then was for the Indianisation of services. To some extent the new conditions in India were exerting a depressing effect upon recruiting in England; and according to Lord Peel, the new Secretary of State, who had replaced Montague there was a falling off of a good class of British recruit for the services, and the I.C.S. were discontented.

In order to allay the misgivings of the British Community in India and in England in general and of the British I.C.S. in particular, Prime Minister Lloyd George made a most tactless and mischievous speech in the House of Commons. He said the services in India were the "steel frame" of the whole structure of administration, that the recent reforms in India were an experiment, and that, although he could not predict the influence which non-co-operation would have upon the next elections, if there was a change in the character of the Legislature and in the purpose of those who were chosen to sit therein, the new situation would have to be taken into account. This down-right statement threatening to go back on the Reforms perhaps reassured the Services. But it had a disastrous effect on the Indian public opinion. The Legislative Assembly in September, 1922 Session at Simla censured the speech, as it was enraged at its menacing and reactionary tone. Lord Reading had to confess that the Prime Minister's speech had upset things tremendously.

Earlier in the year, Reading realised the need of placating Indian opinion, particularly Muslim, in regard to the treaty with Turkey. England was taking sides with Greece against Turkey. This Reading did not like. Reading felt that Gandhiji's success in the Non-co-operation movement was due to the support he had received from the Muhammedans who were enraged at Britain's anti-Turkish Policy.

On 28th February, 1922—a week before Gandhiji's arrest—he submitted a despatch strongly recommending to the British Cabinet to offer favourable terms to Turkey and requested the Secretary of State, Montague, for permission to publish the despatch. This despatch cut across the declared pro-Greek policy of the British Government. Montague without so much as consulting or even without informing Lloyd George or the Foreign Secretary, Curzon, gave this permission. Curzon was shocked and would not forgive Montague. Lloyd George dismissed

Montague but spared Lord Reading who was responsible for the despatch. Montague died two years later at the early age of 45 of broken heart.

Peel succeeded Montague. He was as reactionary as he was ignorant but this change in the Secretaries had an unhappy reaction on Lord Reading. He was already disappointed with India's boycott of the Prince of Wales and Gandhiji's refusal to attend the Round Table Conference to settle India's problems. Montague's departure removed from him one big liberal influence on his policy. Gandhiji's imprisonment was taken by the country quietly and tamely. There were no violent protests. Lord Reading turned reactionary; gave up his liberal policy towards India and noting this change of attitude on his part, the British bureaucracy in India turned equally and openly reactionary anti-Indian. Repression in a severe form was resorted to by Government. They became unfavourable to the new Legislatures and progress was made impossible within the Legislatures. No progress was possible outside the Legislatures because after Gandhiji's imprisonment, the Congress disintegrated. The Bardoli Resolution of February 12, 1922 suspending Civil disobedience was the beginning of the end of non-co-operation.

The Congress leaders thereupon appointed the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee with the hope that something would crop up to enlist the enthusiasm of the masses once again in order to check the rapidly growing disintegration of the party. But the Committee came to the conclusion after touring the country that Civil Disobedience could not be resorted to on a large scale but half-heartedly, with a view to save face, suggested that limited mass civil disobedience on the responsibility of Provincial Congress Committees would be permitted. The Committee reached a dead-lock on the question of Council-entry. Hakim Ajmal Khan, Vithalbhai Patel and Motilal Nehru favoured the Council entry which was opposed by Srinivas Aiyangar, Dr. Ansari and Rajgopalachariar. The Gaya Congress in December, 1922, over which C. R. Das presided decided against Council entry. This led to Das's resignation as Congress President and to the starting of the Swaraj Party with C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru. Their opponents—the no-changers—were Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, C. Vijayaraghavachariar and C. Rajgopalachari. The Swaraj Party accepted the creed of the

Congress and the programme of non-co-operation but decided to enter the Councils. The Swaraj Party did well at the elections. In the Central Legislative Assembly it won 42 out of 101 elective seats with Motilal Nehru as its leader. It also obtained good support in some of the Provincial Legislatures. In Bengal it was the largest party with C. R. Das as its leader.

In the new Legislative Assembly, Motilal Nehru with his 40 disciplined followers of the Swaraj Party worked in close co-operation with Jinnah and Malaviya. This meant 30 more members for opposition, forming the Nationalist Party. The prominent members of this Assembly were—over and above Motilal, Malaviya and Jinnah, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, G. D. Birla, K. C. Neogy, Shanmukham Chetty, Srinivas Aiyangar, Lala Lajpatrai, Victor Sassoon, and Vithalbhai Patel. The most important feature of this Assembly was the friendly and close co-operation between Jinnah and Motilal Nehru.

On 8th February, 1924, the Constitutional question was taken up in the Assembly. Dewan Bahadur Rangachari moved a Resolution urging a revision of the 1919 Act in such a manner as to secure for India Provincial Autonomy in the Provinces and full self-governing Dominion Status within the Empire. Motilal Nehru in his maiden speech moved an amendment calling for a Round Table Conference to recommend a scheme for the establishment of full responsible government in India. The amendment was passed by seventy-six votes to forty-eight. Of the forty-eight who voted against it, twenty-three were officials of the Government with no freedom to vote.

In the September Session of the Legislative Assembly in 1924 the Independent members organised into a regular party of 28 members under the leadership of Jinnah. So, the position of the Nationalist Party formed by an alliance between the Swarajists and Independents became more secure and stable.

Hitherto it had never been questioned that the term "responsible government" used in the 1917 Declaration and in the Preamble to the Government of India Act of 1919 was meant to be interpreted as self-government on the lines of that enjoyed by the British Dominions. But in the course of this debate, Sir Malcolm Hailey, advanced, for the first time, a new interpretation of this term "responsible government". He attempted to draw a distinction between full Dominion self-government and

responsible government. Referring to the term "responsible government", he said: "If you analyse the term "full Dominion self-government" you will see that it is of somewhat wider extent, conveying that not only will the Executive be responsible to the Legislature, but the Legislature will in itself have the full powers which are typical of the modern Dominion. I say there is some difference of substance, because responsible government is not necessarily incompatible with a legislature with limited or restricted powers. It may be that full Dominion self-government is the logical outcome of responsible government, nay, it may be inevitable and historical development of responsible government, *but it is a further and a final step*".

This subtle distinction was untenable. But coming with authority as the official view of the Government it was understood as an attempt to whittle down and go back on the solemn promise made to India in 1917. This naturally created suspicions in India of Government's bona-fides. Hailey announced in the end that a departmental enquiry into the working of the 1919 Act would be instituted. The Labour Government had taken office in England and Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister, said in April: "We know of the serious condition of affairs in India, and we want to improve it. As Lord Olivier says, without equivocation, Dominion Status for India is the idea and the ideal of the Labour Government. If I may say so to our Indian friends. Do your bit for British Democracy; Keep your faith in a British Government. An enquiry is being held by the Government, which means that inquiry to be a serious one. We do not mean it to be an expedient for wasting and losing time. We mean that the enquiry shall produce results which will be the basis for consideration of the Indian constitution, its working, and its possibilities, which we hope will help Indians to co-operate on the way towards the creation of a system which will be self-government".

In her letter to me dated 26th January, 1924, Mrs. Besant hailed the formation of the first Labour Government in U.K.:

"So we have our Labour Government—a great new departure, and very good for us. I think they can do little yet—not till the probable summer election".

The departmental enquiry was followed in May, 1924 by the institution of a public enquiry into the working of the 1919

Act by a Committee of ten under the Chairmanship of Sir Alexander Muddiman, the other members of the Committee being Sir Mohamed Shafi, the Maharaja of Burdwan, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Arthur Froom, Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar, Sir Moncrief Smith, Jinnah and Dr. Paranjpye.

This Reforms Enquiry Committee took evidence in October, 1924 but before it could consider its recommendations, the Labour Government, which had brought the enquiry into being, fell and was replaced by a Conservative administration.

Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to note that although the evidence had been closed, when the members of the Committee were called together to consider their draft Report at the end of November, further reactionary witnesses were brought before them who *in camera* gave evidence in flat contradiction to their published written evidence!

Then followed two Reports—a Majority and Minority Report. The Minority Report was signed by four members—Sapru, Shivaswamy Aiyar, Jinnah and Paranjpye. Shafi, who had signed the Majority Report, supported the recommendations of the Minority Report as soon as he was free from the responsibilities of Office in the Viceroy's Executive Council.

The Minority Report said:

“We have been forced to the conclusion that the existing system had failed and was incapable of yielding better results in the future”.

The Minority Report further said that the only cure for the present state of affairs was to replace Diarchy by responsible unitary Government in the Provinces and at the same time to introduce responsibility in the Central Government with regard to civil administration. They agreed that the Army, Foreign and Political Departments should be reserved meanwhile in the Viceroy's hands.

The Swaraj Party had entered the Legislatures with a view to non-co-operate with and wreck the Reforms. But Motilal, shrewd and understanding statesman that he was, realised the futility of such negative attitude. In his speech on 8th February, 1924 moving his amendment for a Round Table Conference, he said emphatically:

“The whole Act (of 1919) is bad, designed to postpone, to stifle and to suppress the natural desire (for freedom) in the



country". He pointed out that his amendment had been deliberately toned down to secure the co-operation of other parties in the Assembly. He added: "We have come here to offer our co-operation, non-co-operators as we are, if you will care to co-operate with us. That is why we are here. If you agree to have it, we are your men; if you do not, we shall, like men, stand upon our rights and continue to be non-co-operators."

This straightforward and genuine gesture of friendly co-operation was spurned and rejected by the blind beurocracy, supported by the Conservative Government. How the whole history of India would have changed for the better if the British Government had shown foresight and wisdom and accepted Motilal's offer of friendship and co-operation. But that was not to be!

An emergency session of the Legislative Assembly was called in May, 1924 for the purpose of considering the Steel Industry (Protection) Bill, the main purpose of which was to give a bounty to the Tata Iron and Steel Works at Jamshedpur in order to enable it to stabilise and withstand foreign competition.

The Viceroy appointed Sir Chimanlal Setalvad as the Acting President. The bill had no smooth passage and but for the closest co-operation between Motilal and Jinnah on one side and between Motilal, Jinnah and Government on the other, the Bill would never have been passed. The main difficulty came from some members of the Assembly.

I must mention a conversation which took place at Jinnah's residence at dinner three years later where the three guests were Motilal Nehru, R. D. Tata and myself. Jinnah kept the table roaring with laughter. He gave several incidents in regard to this legislation which was passed at the Simla Session. He said that the evening before the final voting was to take place on the Bill, Ratan Tata rushed to his suite of rooms in the Cecil Hotel. Fanatically screaming, he complained to Jinnah that one member of the Assembly asked for a big consideration to vote in favour of the Bill, and threatened that if he did not get it, he would vote against it. This member belonged to Motilal Nehru's party. Jinnah at that late hour immediately sent for the member who was staying in the same hotel and told him, "R. D. Tata has complained to me that you have demanded Rs. 10,000/- for your

vote. You will not get that money. You go to hell and now you get out of this room." Crest fallen, the member withdrew quickly and the next day he voted for the Bill. Ruttie, Motilal and I enjoyed this story as R. D. Tata confirmed that what Jinnah had said was true and Motilal already knew all about it.

Motilal continued his "Co-operation" with Government and with Jinnah and in doing so, he helped India to have a well-established steel industry in the country.

On the other hand, in the Bengal Legislative Council, the Governor, Lord Lytton, brother of Lady Emily Lutyens, the devoted friend and follower of Dr. Besant, called upon C. R. Das, as the leader of the largest group in the Bengal Legislative Council, to form the Ministry. Lytton was sincere and he offered Government's hand of friendship and co-operation to the Swarajist leader. C. R. Das refused. He replied to Lord Lytton:

"I placed before our Party the position as explained by your Excellency and they have just declined to accept your Excellency's kind offer. The members of this Party are pledge-bound to do everything in their power by using the legal right granted under the Reforms Act to put an end to the system of Dyarchy. This duty they cannot discharge if they accept office. The Party is aware that it is possible to offer obstruction from within by accepting office, but they do not consider it honest to accept office which is under the existing system in your Excellency's gift and then turn it into an instrument of obstruction. The awakened consciousness of the people of this country demands a change in the present system of Government and until that is done or unless there is some change in the general administration indicating a change of heart, the people of the country cannot offer willing co-operation. Under the circumstances, I regret I cannot undertake the responsibility regarding the transferred departments. My Party, however, wishes to place on record its appreciation of the spirit of constitutionalism which actuated you in making the offer which we feel bound not to accept."

The Swaraj Party thus came to be a powerful opposition in the Bengal Legislative Council and inflicted repeated defeats upon the Government. Resolution for the release of the detenus and political prisoners was carried by an overwhelming majority. Three Ministries which were formed in succession were defeated

and beaurocracy, in its earlier form, met its doom in Bengal.

I was in Calcutta during this critical fortnight of March, 1924, when the Ministries were thrown out and stayed as the guest of one of C. R. Das's right-hand men. He gave me the full details of how C. R. Das managed to get a majority to throw out the Ministries. Members who would have normally voted with the Government either abstained from voting or voted against Government. C. R. Das had huge funds at his disposal as the leader of the Swaraj Party and as the President of Calcutta Corporation. My friend told me that within one week, C. R. Das disbursed Rs. 42,000/- to some of his non-Swarajist colleagues in the Council and that is how the Ministries were thrown out.

Lytton sent for Das and complained to him of the unfair ways C. R. Das had adopted to defeat Lytton's Ministries. C. R. Das is reported to have replied that Lord Lytton and his Government had powers of patronage by offering jobs to sons, nephews and sons-in-law of members and get the Members to vote for Government. C. R. Das had no such patronage to offer and therefore adopted more direct means to influence the Members' votes!

I returned to Bombay early in April and passed on the detailed story to the able Assistant Editor of the *Times of India*, David Walker. I also gave the full story to Mrs. Besant and she referred to these strange happenings in Calcutta in an editorial note. The *Times of India* published the following editorial in its issue of 4th April under the caption "Politics in Bengal".

"By entering the councils, the Swarajists committed themselves to an acceptance of the rules which governed those bodies. The motive with which Council entry was sought does not alter that fundamental fact. The ending or mending of the Councils may be the aim of the Swarajists. But they have to mend or end them without infringing the rules of the procedure. Thus they cannot mend them by braining the President with the mace, nor can they end them by singing patriotic sound all the while Government members and supporters are speaking. They must respect the Chair and they must allow their opponents to speak. We cannot see therefore that the enterprising Swarajist who desired to call in question the conduct of Lord Lytton in interviewing certain members of the Council at Government House the day before a debate had a leg to stand on in his attack. He ought

to have accepted the ruling of the Chair and made no further reference to the matter. The fact that the Governor of a province, unlike the King, whom he represents, at certain definite political powers does not affect the validity of the rule that the Governor's conduct cannot be made a matter of criticism in the Legislature. It may be a bad rule. There may be a case for its alteration in the directive of differentiating between the Governor in his reigning capacity, so to speak, and the Governor in his political capacity and making his acts in the latter valid grounds for comment. But, until that examination is made and until the rule is altered, no Member of Council has the right to infringe the existing rules. So much for the question of principle. On the practical question, there is no question in the right of the Governor to consult and to represent facts to any citizens with public responsibilities. The Swarajists are not citizens with public responsibilities, for, in Bengal at least, they publicly repudiated their responsibilities to take a share in the running of the province. Why consult them? Why should any obligation rest upon the Governor to invite them to a conference at Government House at which he desires the presence of other members of other parties? Even if such an invitation had been made, we can guess with fair certainty what the result would have been—a polite refusal.

Apart from this single question, we have received some very curious tales about the progress of politics in Bengal. Politics is traditionally a dirty game. It has that reputation simply because it is a game played in the full glare of publicity which shows up every deviation from strict standards of morality. But there is no reason why the game should not be played cleanly. It ought to be even in Bengal, always. Yet the incident which our informants narrate to us show the position of things to be far from savoury. We have read that the "Swarajists have spared neither time nor money nor energy in their attempts to defeat and embarrass the Government." We can understand the devotion of time and energy. But how does money come into it? The sum of the information we have received is that an ingenious system of "graft", rather in the manner of American politics, is gaining strength in Bengal. We hope that these charges have little foundation. But they have been made in such a manner that we are left in little doubt that there is something in them.

Fully to substantiate such a charge there would be required a complete exposure of all the contributions towards the war chest of the Swarajists and an account of all the expenditure. Short of a confession on the part of the treasurer of those funds—we presume there is an official treasurer—there is little chance of such an exposure being made. But there is no reason why money should be allowed for ever to corrupt Indian political life. The most unpleasant features of British politics, and of American politics as well, is not so much the use made of party funds as the manner in which subscriptions are given to them. We know little of the methods employed for obtaining money for political purposes in India. But there certainly exists grave dissatisfaction with the methods in which some of it is spent. There is only one way to remove such dissatisfaction—the promulgation of a law making it obligatory upon all political parties to render public account of their income and expenditure and to submit them to public audit.”

That the moral tone of the Bengal Legislature did not show any improvement by the passage of time can be gauged from the remarks of Lord Casey, then Governor of Bengal, before partition, in his “Personal Experience—1939-1946”. He writes: “Politics ‘hotted up’ again on March 28th, 1945 when the Bengal Government was beaten on a snap vote in the Assembly on a Budget item, by reason of twenty Government supporters crossing the floor, a manoeuvre engineered by a Muslim with ambitions to get into the Ministry. A lot of money was said to have passed, and it was clear beyond doubt that it had. The individual who engineered it was frank enough to let it be known that he would repeat the performance the next day unless he were told he would be given a place in the Ministry. This sort of intolerable blackmail brought Section 93 Government closer and closer. It was followed the next day by the Speaker acting unconstitutionally in saying that the Government had been beaten and that in consequence he was *functus officio*, and adjourning the Assembly *sine die*. It was my function to say whether there was a Ministry in office, not the Speaker’s. This was the last straw. The Ministry was not in control of the Assembly and I was convinced from many discussions with relevant people that no alternative Government was possible that would last more than a week.”

By the time Das defeated the Lytton Ministries by these questionable methods, Gandhiji was recouping in Juhu after his release on February 5 after operation for appendicitis. Hundreds of people went to Juhu every morning and evening to take 'darshan' of him. They could not meet Gandhiji, as he was not permitted to see visitors. His visitors did what they thought was the next best thing. They did 'puja' to the two goats who were tied in the front of the bungalow for giving milk to Gandhiji. The visitors respectfully poured water on the hoofs of the goats and applied this water to their eyes and then drank some of it! This I found when I visited C. F. Andrews who was staying with Gandhiji. I asked C. F. Andrews to convey my respects to Gandhiji and told Andrews the full story of how Das had managed to defeat the Lytton Ministries. I gave him all the minutest details of the story. Six months later, Gandhiji sent for me. He said during his trip to Calcutta he had questioned C. R. Das about the methods Das had employed in wrecking the Ministries. C. R. Das had, thereupon, shown him the accounts of the Swaraj Party funds and there was no entry in the accounts of the type I had suggested to Andrews. No money had passed from the Swaraj Party funds to members to vote against the Ministries. I did not argue with Gandhiji that it would not be helpful to record such payments in the accounts!

After wrecking the Ministries, Das started having second thoughts on the subject. He realised that his victory was negative and that he had achieved nothing positive.

In May, 1925, Das sent a message from Darjeeling to Mrs. Besant in Madras that he wanted to see her, he must see her, but he was too ill to leave Darjeeling, would she please go and see him there. Within a few hours of her getting this telegram, Mrs. Besant, then 78, was on her way to Darjeeling.

C. R. Das told Mrs. Besant: "You were right. I have smashed the Montague reforms. I have defeated Lord Lytton, voted out his Ministry in Bengal. I have won but as you had said this has been a negative victory. Tell me what I should do now. I have got into a blind alley. Please take me out" Mrs. Besant replied: "This will take you out and we can work together". And she handed over to him the Commonwealth of India Bill. Das went over the clauses of the Bill with her and assured her that he would discuss the matter further with his

colleagues as soon as he returned to Calcutta. But this was not to be, for he passed away in Darjeeling on 15th June, within a fortnight of his seeing Mrs. Besant. Throughout that fortnight, he was in a mood to come to terms with the British and he felt that Lord Reading's presence in London at that time would help. Das was told that Lord Reading was trying to get the Minority Report of the Muddiman Committee accepted by Parliament. Das said to Gandhiji after Mrs. Besant had left Darjeeling that he (Das) had an intuition and inner feeling that something big was about to happen.

After Das had reached agreement with Gandhiji, he wrote a letter to Mrs. Besant in which he conveyed to her their views about the Common-wealth of India Bill. He also wished to be informed of the steps she visualised in case the Government rejected the Bill. After C. R. Das's death, Mrs. Besant wrote :

"His medical adviser counselled a trip to Europe at the end of the cold weather. I spent several hours with him in Darjeeling in three long interviews on the 29th and 30th of May. He was much changed in manner and outlook as was indeed seen in his Faridpur speech. His old aggressiveness had disappeared and he was very calm and gentle"

For twenty three months (March 1922 to February 1924) Gandhiji was in Yeravda. He spent his months quietly. He has not kept a report of his activities there but fortunately for history, Indulal Yagnik was with him for a few months and has made a wonderful record in his auto-biography of the events that took place in Yeravda during those months. It is not necessary to go into details about them but two or three important details must be mentioned. First, Gandhiji surrounded himself with books — English, Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati — very few of light literature, mostly concerned with Hindu religion, the Vedas and the Upnishads, history and sociology. One particular incident has to be recorded to show Gandhiji's humanity and courage and his spirit of oneness with life. An African (Somali) Warder with life sentence for murder who was in attendance on Gandhiji was bitten one night by a scorpion. He was in intense pain and suffering. Gandhiji was informed. He asked for a knife but it was not available. So he sucked the man's poisoned part and spat out the poison and he did this continuously till the Warder was free from the effect of the poison-bite.

Gandhiji expressed himself strongly against any kind of industrialisation in India and favoured only hand-spinning and hand-weaving. Asked if Khadi, before or after Swaraj was attained, could stand the competition against industrialisation, Gandhiji said he had not thought about it and did not give an answer.

In January, 1924, Gandhiji was operated upon at the Sossoon Hospital for appendicitis. As the operation was half-way through, electric lights failed in the operation theatre but the operation was successful. On 5th February, he was unconditionally released. He then went to Juhu for convalescence. The controversy between the 'No-changers' and the 'Pro-change' Swarajists was still raging and Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das met Gandhiji in Juhu late in May. Gandhiji thought Council entry was incompatible with non-co-operation. But Council entry was a settled fact and there was nothing that Gandhiji could do about it. He refused in a statement any kind of help to the Swarajists and asked his friends to devote their energies to the constructive work like hand-spinning and hand-weaving and boycott of foreign cloth. Das and Nehru issued a counter statement implying defiance of Gandhiji's point of view. Gandhiji asked the Swarajists to carry on their work through their own organization and not as part of the Congress.

Gandhiji took up the fight in the A.I.C.C. meeting in June at Ahmedabad and he tried to outwit the Swarajists by introducing the qualification of hand-spinning for membership of any Congress organisation. Motilal opposed Gandhiji vigorously saying that Gandhiji's Charkha programme would not bring Swaraj. He ridiculed Gandhiji's followers by asking them how much they spun when Gandhiji was in jail. Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das with their followers walked out of the A.I.C.C. meeting as a protest against Gandhiji's insistence on penal clause about Charkha. Gandhiji was unnerved having realised that the A.I.C.C. was not solidly with him. He gave up his fight against Council entry. Motilal and Das were back in the A.I.C.C. Gandhiji met with another set back when Das opposed Gandhiji's resolution condemning unreservedly the murder of an Englishman by Gopinath Saha. Das, while condemning the murder, appreciated the motives lying behind it. Das's amendment was lost by 78 votes against 70. Gandhiji was shocked at his narrow majority. He condemned his own followers for



being shaky and hypocritical. Gandhiji collapsed and after recovering consciousness talked in terms of retiring from the Congress. Gandhiji admitted Das's victory against him.

Gandhiji's ideas thereupon underwent a sudden and radical change. He now strove for unity not only between the orthodox Congressmen and the Swarajists but also between Hindus and Muslims and between Congress and other political parties. The Bengal ordinances and the repression that followed helped Das and Gandhiji to get together again.

Mrs. Besant saw Gandhiji early in October in Bombay. I met her immediately after her meeting with him. She told me that as Gandhiji was now trying for unity, she was willing to work with him. She had accepted his invitation to attend the Belgaum Congress of which he was to be President, late in December. As an ex-President of the Congress, she was an ex-officio member of the A.I.C.C. I smiled and told her that I would go to Belgaum with her but would neither wear Khaddar nor spin. Mrs. Besant said that she understood and appreciated my frankness and my point of view. The Theosophical Convention was held that year in Bombay and Mrs. Besant and ten of her followers including myself reached Belgaum on the second day of the Sessions, having assumed that the first day, as was usual, would be taken up by formalities of the election of Congress President and the Presidential address. What actually happened, Mrs. Besant describes in her letter to Srinivas Sastri of 29th December :

"I visited the Congress at Belgaum in order to oppose the resolution giving to the Swarajya Party the sole right to speak in the name of the Congress in the Legislatures. I had thought that the speeches of the Chairman of the Reception Committee, the election of the President and the Presidential speech would take up the first day, and I could not reach the Congress till the second day. But the President (Gandhi) distributed copies of his speech the day before and only said a few words and the long resolution accepting the Das-Nehru-Gandhi Pact, the 2000 yards of yarn franchise and giving a complete free hand to the Swarajya Party in the Councils was passed before we reached Belgaum. I asked Mr. Gandhi to allow me to state why the National Home Rulers could not join the Congress under

the Resolution, and he allowed me to do so; I made a short speech, explaining that we could not accept the 2000 yards p.m. franchise, nor the right given to a single political party, with whose policy we disagreed, to represent the Congress. That the Resolution shut out the Moderates, the Liberals, the National Home Rulers, and all who objected to give the Swarajya Party a free hand in representing the Congress, or in putting any one party as committing the Congress to any political action it chose to take, thus making the Congress not a National one, and I asked them to open the Congress door to all political parties as of old. A good deal of sympathy was shown by the audience.

I wish to make a proposition. Would it not be well for the political parties outside the Congress and shut out by the Resolution, to revive the old Congress, which has the whole Congress history up to Calcutta in 1920 behind it, leaving the new Congress a life dating only from September, 1920 behind it? We should adopt the old policy of having an elected All-India Committee, and affiliating all political associations which would accept its creed—Home Rule or Swaraj, within the Empire, and leaving each Association free to work for this in its own way. If so, could we not have a Conference, say at Allahabad at the end of February, after the Convention; or at Delhi, if preferred, earlier in the month, before the Convention Conference meet, and revive the old Political Congress under whatever name is selected? Personally, I think such a name as the 'All-India Political Congress' would be good.

It would not be fair to ask the Liberal Federation to join the Convention, though many of them are in it, but there would be no loss of dignity in its Provincial Branches affiliating with such a body made largely by itself. The invitation to the Conference might be signed by leading Liberals and others, so as not to make it a one-party-move. There is no All-India body representing opinion outside the Swarajya Party, which has captured the Congress, and I think there should be one, as the Congress has ceased to represent politically any party but one, but is poorly represented in all Councils except the C.P., the Bengal and the Indian legislatures."

As Mrs. Besant said in this letter, Gandhiji surrendered the Congress to the Swaraj Party. For over eight months after his release from Yervada, he fought the Swaraj Party and its leaders—Das and Nehru. Having failed either to win them over or to defeat them, he conceded victory to them. He withdrew into the background, gave up politics and took to what he called the constructive programme of the Congress viz. Charka, Hindu-Muslim Unity, the uplift of the Harijans and the boycott of foreign cloth. Gandhiji bided his time hoping that he would some day soon get back to the leadership of the Congress. In the meantime, the political work of the Congress was carried on by the Swaraj Party and it did it well. Non-co-operation was dead. Early in 1925, C. R. Das was a different man, chastened by experience and force of circumstances. His wrecking the Reforms and non-co-operating inside the Councils were negative activities. Das changed his policy and tactics.

In March, 1925, Das in a statement condemned unreservedly violence for political purposes. The Government acclaimed this manifesto as a new gesture. Lord Birkenhead, the Secretary of State, reacted to it appreciatively in his House of Lords speech on 31st March: "I invite Mr. Das—and I have not used in the course of this debate a harsh word about him—to take a further step. I ask him to go forward and co-operate with the Government in repressing the violence which he deprecates." Das was equally friendly to Birkenhead. On April 3, he said he was not only willing but anxious to devote the rest of his life to eradicate violence, but his efforts were bound to be ineffective unless a favourable atmosphere was created by the Government by removing those deep-rooted causes of political and economic discontent of which the revolutionary and violent activities were mere symptoms. Das who was always suspected of having sympathy with the terrorist movement and also of financing it now demanded a distinct and authoritative declaration by Government in regard to the foundation of the freedom and he felt sure that the revolutionary movement would be a thing of the past.

The Under Secretary of State three days later, asked for constructive proposals from Das endorsed by Government of Bengal and the Government of India and assured that they would receive favourable consideration.

In his Presidential speech at the Bengal Provincial Confer-

ence at Faridpur on May 2, Das defended the ideal of Dominion Status as against independence and also offered co-operation with Government. He asked for amnesty for political prisoners and guarantee for the establishment of Swaraj within the Commonwealth in the near future.

Das thus offered his hand of fellowship to the Government. Non-co-operation with him was dead.

Das had always kept friendly contacts with Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal. He carried on with Lord Lytton negotiations for Dominion Status.

Das was a man of vision and could look far into the future.

The Faridpur speech was his last testament to the nation. Das said he would prefer membership of the Commonwealth as it would, in his view, be helpful for maintenance of world peace. In order to achieve such a consummation, he was willing to work for a compromise with the British Government on honourable terms. Das said that free alliance within the Commonwealth carried with it the right of separation. No nation could live in isolation in the modern age and the idea of Commonwealth had for him a spiritual connotation. Das continued: "The idea of Commonwealth has a deep significance for me. I believe in world peace, in the ultimate federation of the world, and I think that the great Commonwealth of the Nations of the world—a federation of diverse races, each with its distinct life, distinct civilisation, its distinct moral outlook—if properly led by statesmen at the helm—is bound to make a lasting contribution to the great problem, the problem of knitting the world into the greatest federation the mind can conceive, the federation of the human race. It must be properly led by statesmen at the helm, for the development of the idea involves apparent sacrifice on the part of the constituent nations, involves the giving up for good the empire idea with its ugly attribute of domination. I think it is for the good of India, for the good of the Commonwealth, for the good of the world that India should strive with the Commonwealth for the freedom of all people of all countries and thus serve the cause of humanity."

"When the time for settlement comes, as it is bound to come, enter the peace conference not in the spirit of arrogance but with becoming humility so that it may be said of you that you were greater in your achievement than in adversity and

when you discuss the terms of settlement do not forget the larger claims of humanity in your pride of nationalism which is but a process of self-realisation, self-development and self-fulfilment, and is not an end in itself.

I have a clear vision as to what I seek. I seek a federation of the States of India, each free to follow, as it must follow, the culture and tradition of its own people, each bound to each in the common service of all.....a great federation within a great federation of free nations whose freedom is the freedom of the people, whose service is to man and whose unity is the hope of peace among the peoples of the earth”.

Das then turned to Mrs. Besant for help and guidance. Das died within a fortnight of his meeting Mrs. Besant. Das had lost complete confidence in non-co-operation—violent or non-violent and I have no doubt that he had realised that Mrs. Besant was right and Gandhiji was wrong. If he had lived two or three or five years more, he would have worked with Mrs. Besant for the Commonwealth of India Bill and would have wrested the political leadership of the country from Gandhiji for all time to come. The history of India would have taken a different turn. The Government of India and the British Government would have liked to come to terms with Das for a forward step towards Swaraj, knowing Das's strength and ability and feeling confident that he would be able to deliver the goods.

Das's death not only made the Government more cautious but also reversed the policy of the Swaraj Party back to non-co-operation as resolved at the Kanpur Congress in December, 1925, presided over by Mrs. Naidu.

Earlier, throughout the year, Motilal Nehru carried on a vigorous fight in the Indian Legislative Assembly. In this he was helped by Jinnah. Jinnah had organised the Independent Members of the Assembly into a regular party of 28 members. So the position of the Nationalist Party formed by an alliance between the Swarajists and Independents became more secure and stable, and this combined party passed an amendment rejecting Government of India's resolution for the acceptance of the Lee Commission Report.

On September 9, 1925, Motilal's amendment on Constitutional Reform demanded *inter alia* the appointment of a Con-

vention, Round Table Conference or other suitable agency to frame a detailed scheme for effecting fundamental changes in the present constitutional machinery and administration of India —was carried in the Assembly with the help of Jinnah's Independent Party.

The Kanpur Congress decided to boycott the Legislature. Motilal Nehru, therefore, early in March 1926 announced in the Assembly that his Party was under a mandate to walk out in view of the Government's attitude over the Reform issue and the Swarajists walked out of the Assembly. This was a political blunder for the Swaraj Party had done useful work in the Assembly and co-operation between Motilal and Jinnah not only helped political unity of different parties in the country but also helped the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Motilal had confidence and respect for Jinnah and Jinnah had respect and confidence in Motilal.

## CHAPTER XXII

### MRS. BESANT'S LETTERS—1922-1924 NATIONAL CONVENTION

#### THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDIA BILL

ON 5th February, 1922, a week before Gandhiji called off his Civil Disobedience movement and a month before his arrest and conviction, Mrs. Besant wrote to me from Madras:

"I have put the *Times* article in *New India*.

"I have no doubt as to the leanings of Lord Reading and Sapru but others have also to be consulted, and the feeble attitude of the Moderates with regard to facing the revolution is not encouraging to a Viceroy. They are either blind or timid and he cannot rely on them for steady and vigorous support.

Then, she wrote to me from Delhi on 7th March:

"There is some useful work I can do here and I have to delay my journey to Australia, so I am not leaving until the 12th, arriving at Colaba at 2 p.m. on Monday, 13th, and leaving same night.

"Jamnadas and some others are beginning to form a definite party in the Assembly; it is, like English parties, to include non-members all over India, and they are also forming a 1921 Club—Lady Emily and Jamnadas have formed a Committee—with a political Section like ours, to which members of the 'National Party' can belong."

On April 4, she wrote from Madras:

"The National Party looks promising in Bombay from what you say. Let me know how you get on. What did Sastri think of it? I hope Sir Stanley Reed would have helped.

I am arranging to leave Colombo on the 24th but do not like going though I want very much to see Leadbeater.

"It is a great triumph for the Assembly to have carried its reductions and for the Viceroy to have accepted them. It almost

looks, too, as if some reductions may be made in this military Budget, on Sir Shivaswamy's lines. Our party did well.

"I am going to give Sastri a dinner on the 11th at the 1921 Club."

Again, on April 13, she wrote:

"I enclose an article which appears in today's *New India*, suggesting a new departure in political work. It may lead first to a newspaper discussion and then to the meeting of a few persons to agree on a statement of a working programme. Would you write an article and send it to 'The Editor' as above?"

Just before she sailed for Australia, Mrs. Besant wrote to me on April 17th:

"Thank you for the reports. I am printing the Labour one tomorrow. The other, you said, is as yet private. I will read them, and write you on them.

"I enclose some pulls of my articles in *New India*. If you know any one who would write well, please get hold of him. I do not know whether Sir Stanley Reed is in Bombay. Please write yourself as soon as you can

"The important points are:

"Education of constituencies to give mandate at next election to the members to frame a constitution.

"That the new constitution shall come from members of the Legislatures and a few selected by them with mandate of constituencies behind them.

"That a Deputation of members, with any co-opted persons they invite shall go on deputation to the English Parliament for a formal ratification of the Constitution they present in India's name.

"I am so sorry not to see you before I leave."

All these informative and instructive letters indicate how Mrs. Besant's mind was working. She wanted India to draft a Constitution and present it to British Government for acceptance. She returned to India from Australia by the second week of June and on 18th June she wrote to me:

"I am very pressed just now but will try to write on Friday."

On 1st July, she wrote to me:

"We had a useful meeting of 1921' last Tuesday and talked over the work for the next elections. We agreed unanimously



that the new Constitution should be drafted by Indians and we appointed a Committee of seven to draw up a broad outline i.e., what we consider it's necessary main constituents. This is to be substituted in next. If agreed on, or as amended, I think we should circulate it to all H. R. Leagues for discussion and send it to leading papers. We have to choose travelling lecturers to educate Constituencies for the next election.

"I shall probably go to Bhavnagar in August, and then on to Simla and should like to stay a few days in Bombay."

She wrote to me on 8th, 15th and 12th July and 20th September, and 16th November on different subjects, some of them non-political.

After the suspension or rather the abandonment by Gandhiji of the civil disobedience movement as a result of the brutal murders at Chauri Chaura and his arrest and conviction in March, all Congress activities came to a stand-still. Congress leaders like Das and Nehru were angry with Gandhiji for abandoning civil disobedience. The Congress leaders started quarrelling among themselves—Swarajists and No-Changers—on the question of Council entry and the Congress leaders beat the air by appointing a civil disobedience enquiry Committee to find out if civil disobedience could be revived, knowing full well that it would not and could not be revived. The Congress leaders were surrounded by an atmosphere of gloom and frustration, not knowing where to turn. Das and Motilal Nehru found a way out by advocating Council entry, just reviving the political agitation on constitutional lines in place of the discarded will-o'-the-wisp civil disobedience. But Mrs. Besant kept the flag of Indian agitation flying as can be seen from her letters to me. A part of the story of the tremendous activity and travel can be told in her own words, viz., her letters to me in 1922, 1923 and 1924. During these three years, she wrote to me 36 letters. She was travelling all over the country and planning for the next step forward viz., the framing of a Constitution for India. Wherever she went, she met groups of people—Legislators for the purpose of forming a non-Congress National Party, opposed to civil disobedience. She was able to rally a good deal of support. She entrusted me with her political work in the Bombay Presidency.

Through her letters in 1922 onwards, she kept me informed

of her movements and activities. On 25th January, 1923, she wrote to me from Patna :

"Your letter has just reached me here. I enclose six blank cards, with dates altered. Mrs. Jinarajadas is sending out for me cards with the new dates. Perhaps you will have had them ere this.

"I am visiting places on my way to Delhi, as I had to be in Calcutta on a fixed date before the Delhi dates were changed".

On January 28th, she wrote to me from Allahabad :

"Will you, if possible, have the enclosed put in the Bombay papers?

"I am so glad you can come to the Conference; bring the Bombay members if you can. Things look very well.

"The change of dates suits both Madras and U.P. I came here yesterday to meet Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and we had a little meeting of Liberals last afternoon. I had similar meetings in Calcutta and Patna. Could you get your Ministers to come? Sapru advises it, and they should give a lead but if they do not care for the Convention idea, they may as well stay away, as Sapru will press for a strong concerted movement to educate the electorates till November and the Convention in 1924."

At last the big day came : On 12th and 13th February, 1923, was held at Delhi a Conference convened by Mrs. Besant of the elected members of the Central and Provincial Legislatures presided over by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, which drew up the outline of a Constitution for India on the basis of Dominion Status. The object of the Conference was to outline a programme for submission to the electorate and to provide an elastic machinery for the co-ordination of the efforts of its members and organisations, to call a National Convention after the approaching elections, in order to obtain from the Commonwealth of India Dominion Status in her external relations and Swaraj in her internal relations. Among the leaders who worked with Mrs. Besant were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, T. Rangachari, Dr. Gour, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas, Srinivas Sastri and Sir C. P. Ramswamy Aiyar. Busy though she was with the work of this Conference, she found time to write to me on 15th February :

"I am so sorry you would not come. The Conference has passed off splendidly. I hope the *Times of India* has published

a good report. The A.P.I. has served us very well. The Pioneer gave 4 columns to the first day; 3 to the second. The only omission in the latter is that my own name has to be added to the Investigation Select Committee; the omission was not the reporter's fault, as I had not meant to serve on it, and it was added at the end.

"I send you with this cards of the members of the Bombay Council who joined, and also the cards of others who were not able to come. I want you to send all of these at once to the people addressed, who are all on the Central Council, inviting them to meet on 21st at 6-30 at China Bagh if available, if not at some other place you choose. The object of the meeting is to arrange the Provincial organisation and it is vital. And I will tell the members the arrangements made for working in the Select Committees. I enclose draft of a letter for you to sign. The draft gives you the points to put in your own words".

The National Conference made a steady progress as a separate political organisation. Mrs. Besant, Srinivas Sastri and C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar carried on an educative propaganda in "New India" and in July, 1922 it was resolved that Indian Constitutional Reformers should formulate a proposal for a scheme of Home Rule, including complete Provincial Autonomy and responsibility in the Central Government. A circular was accordingly sent round among parties committed to Constitutional Reform, had an excellent Press and met with considerable approval. The February 1923 Conference appointed five Committees to issue literature on the Reforms—including the work by the Legislatures during the last three years—Defence, Indianisation of Services, Finance and Taxation and Supreme Court. B. Shiva Rao and I contributed an exhaustive paper on the work of the Bombay Legislature. The Reforms Committee compiled valuable and exhaustive statistics of work done in the Legislatures. These were all published. The object of this work was 'To explode, beyond possibility of repair, the N.C.O. pretence that the Legislatures have done nothing'.

The work of the organisers of this National Conference was carried silently beyond the range of popular eye, and so the results achieved by Mrs. Besant and her co-workers did not earn that degree of recognition from the public, that they undoubted-

ly merited. But the idea of the Convention was steadily kept before the public by Mrs. Besant's paper "New India" though no definite advance could be made till 1924.

On April 11, Mrs. Besant wrote to me :

"It is very good that you were able to prevent the N.C.O.'s having the Presidentship of the Bombay Corporation, and that you did so well on the Standing Committee.

"I regard your municipal work as extremely important, and there is no better training for later work. If you learn to handle men and affairs in a Municipality, you will know how to deal with them in larger areas. The affairs of a city are most important for the life and health of the poor, and you are doing 'my work' there—Master's work—as much as if you were in the Assembly. Municipal work touches immediately the happiness or misery of the poor, their life or death, their health or disease. Do not trouble about criticism, my dear son. Go on doing your duty. See what useful work your Committee did on prostitution. Do not worry yourself as to what people say."

On June 10, 1923 she wrote to me :

"I am most thankful you did not fall into the trap laid. To have become a paid agent of the Liberals would have been a ruinous blunder. We are not "Liberals" though we help them. They are unreliable as politicians and never help others. We can join no party but the Home Rule League. We are 'Manu's' men and acknowledge no other leader. I am too weak to write. So glad to have your letters."

This letter has to be explained. I had written to her that some liberal friends particularly Sir Cowasji Jehangir, had offered Rs. 1,000 a month to me so that I could continue without anxiety my political and social work. They said there were no strings attached to this offer. But I immediately decided to reject this gesture from my friends. I took the decision myself and only then wrote to Mrs. Besant, and in reply to this she sent me the above letter signed "A. B.". She was ill with serious knee-trouble.

On August 3, 1923, she wrote :

"Is there any chance of the Prostitution Bill and the Beggars Bill going through in the present Council? If yes, wire me.

"The 'Times of India' notice is very good."

The Prostitution Bill was enacted into law in the Bombay

Legislative Council Session of August, 1923.

On September 16, 1923, she wrote:

"I liked your Maternity articles. I am reprinting them as a leaflet among a set which states what various subjects should receive the attention of the new Councils".

On January 26, 1924, she wrote:

"It was a great relief to know the boy was better.

"So we have our Labour Government—a great new departure—and very good for us, there, I think they can do little yet not till the probable summer election.

"There is no harm, dear son, in your having personal ambition, if you subordinate it, as you do, to the Master's work and to the will to serve. I have full confidence in your steadfastness and real devotion and you have always my blessing".

The National Conference met again in Delhi in February, 1924. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru again presided. Mrs. Besant wrote to me on February 24:

"We have had a most successful Conference. I do not know how the Bombay Press has treated us, but the *Leader* has 5 columns on first day, and the *Pioneer* 3 and an editorial note. We had our own reporters, the same as last year, and the Associated Press, *Hindu*, *Times of India*, *Bombay Chronicle*, *London Times* and *Madras Mail*.

The great thing is that the Convention is fixed; it will be held at Allahabad, April 22, 23, etc. That is a big landmark, the beginning of the last stage to Home Rule.

Lady Emily, Raja and Dorothy and myself will leave here on Wednesday, 27th, at 22.20 reaching Bombay (Victoria) at 9 a.m. Delhi Express they call the train. We think it would be a good thing for me to give a lecture on Friday on "The National Convention".

"All the things here have played into our hands. The N.C.O.s have co-operated with the Government as we never did, placing in the hands the whole power of appointing a Committee to draw up a scheme. Then the Government declines the power and leaves them high and dry. Meanwhile, we go quietly ahead; report our work, arrange next year's work, fix the date of Convention, with power to co-opt and ask also for a Commission to look into matters; we meanwhile are going ahead shaping a Constitution and sending a deputation to England. Not so bad."

On March 13, she wrote :

"Are you willing to go on deputation to England on behalf of the National Conference, if possible with Mr. Shanmukham Chetty, M.L.A., and Mr. A. Ranganathan, M.L.C., about the 2nd week in May? I hope to obtain hospitality in London for our Deputation members, and to help, if not to cover completely, the passage money to and fro. Rama Rao will be going for the Star, and as he has been abroad before, I think it would be a good plan to travel with him and probably to go by the Italian line by which R has travelled and so see a part of the Continent on the way. I want you as the late member for Labour in the Bombay Council, because of your thorough acquaintance with Labour conditions in town. You would specially be ready to answer questions by M.P.s from your first hand knowledge. Ranganathan will do the same for villagers.

Please arrange to take up this work; it is of vital importance and let me know as soon as possible. Shanmukham Chetty is rich and does for himself."

I immediately replied that I would be glad to join the Deputation and on April 2, she wrote to me :

"I am exceedingly glad that you come on the Deputation. Let me know when we meet the date of your arrival in London."

Unfortunately, owing to circumstances beyond my control, I could not go to England. Mrs. Besant told me "Do not be disappointed. You will get many opportunities to travel abroad to do your good work in foreign land"; and her blessings have come true.

I made a three month trip to Europe in May-August, 1923 and since the end of the Second World War, I have been seven times out of India, including twice to the United States, three times to U.K., thrice to Malaya and Singapore, once to Hong Kong and once to East Africa.

The National Convention met in Allahabad in April, 1924. It drafted the Commonwealth of India Bill. A Deputation, consisting of Mrs. Besant and Sastri left for U.K. on 26th April, to press the Home Rule Campaign on behalf of the National Convention. The Deputation addressed several meetings and there were select gatherings, private dinners to the Secretary of State by a fully representative gathering of Indian and various other functions. Mrs. Besant had a long talk with the Prime Minister,

Ramsay MacDonald. She returned to India early in September. Whilst she was in England, there were terrible outbreaks of communal rioting and violence in different parts of India, particularly in Gulbarga (then Hyderabad State) and Kohat (N.W.F. Province). Gandhiji broke down and decided to undertake a 21 days' fast from 17th September as penance. This was the first major fast that Gandhiji undertook and the news stunned the country. Maulana Mohammed Ali, Haqim Ajmal Khan and Swami Shraddhanand convened a conference of All-India leaders to devise ways and means to restore communal unity and thereby save Gandhiji's life. Motilal Nehru presided at the Conference attended by 300 All-India leaders, including Mrs. Besant. Gandhiji continued his fast right till the 21st day. Gandhiji's fast, however, did not produce the desired effect of communal amity for on the fourth day of his fast, serious rioting broke out at Shahjahanpur and the very day on which Gandhiji broke his fast viz. 8th October, there were serious communal riots at Allahabad, Kanchrapora near Calcutta, and at Sagar and Jabalpur in C.P.

The Hindu-Muslim relations worsened in 1925 and 1926. Sixteen serious communal riots occurred in 1925 at Delhi, Aligarh, Arvi (C.P.) and Sholapur, among other places. In 1926 April, Calcutta witnessed one of the worst communal riots, over the question of music before the mosque. There were more riots in other parts of Bengal, and at Rawalpindi and Allahabad and Delhi.

For two years—1925 and 1926, Gandhiji kept aloof from these communal questions. Swami Shraddhanand was murdered on his sick bed by a young Muslim on 23rd December, 1926. Riots broke out in different parts of the country in 1927 and it is pertinent to quote here from the Simon Commission Report:

"Every year since 1923 has witnessed communal rioting on an extensive, and, in fact, on an increasing scale which has as yet shown no sign of abating. The Commission listed 112 communal riots during the years 1922 to 1927, including 31 during 1927. Every province was affected by these riots which were not confined to any particular area.

To resume the story of Mrs. Besant's work: On her return from England in September, 1924, Mrs. Besant made serious

efforts to establish unity among different political parties in India. Gandhiji also had realised the need of such unity and had made peace with the Swarajists. To give a definite shape to the idea of unity of all parties, Mohamed Ali, the Congress President, convened a conference of all parties to meet the A.I.C.C. at Bombay on November 21 and 22. About 400 delegates responded. Sir Dinshaw Petit presided at this Conference. The resolution moved by C. Y. Chintamani, condemned the recent Bengal Ordinances. The resolution read:

“While firmly of opinion that anarchical organisations can never secure Swaraj to the people of India, and while disapproving and condemning most emphatically such organisations, if any, this Conference representing all classes and communities in India and every variety of public opinion, views with the strongest disapproval and condemns the action of the Governor-General in promulgating the Criminal Law Amendment Ordinance of 1924, as such an extraordinary measure, being a direct invasion upon individual liberty, should not have been enacted without the sanction of the Legislature and as it easily lends itself at the hands of the Executive to grave abuses resulting in implicating innocent persons, and in interfering with constitutional political activity as past experience of similar measures has repeatedly demonstrated.”

Gandhiji then moved for the appointment of a Committee to consider the best way of reuniting all political parties in the Indian National Congress, to prepare a scheme of Swaraj, including the solution of Hindu-Muslim and like questions in their political aspects. The Resolution was unanimously accepted.

On 23rd January, 1925, the Conference met again at Delhi, Gandhiji presiding. A Sub-Committee was appointed which divided itself into two groups, one to deal with the Hindu-Muslim unity and the other presided over by Mrs. Besant to outline a scheme of Swaraj. The group dealing with the scheme of Swaraj took the Draft Bill prepared by the National Convention in December, 1924 (The Commonwealth of India Bill) as its basis and submitted a report on 23rd February, laying down certain general principles. The other group could not arrive at any agreement on the main question of the revision of the “Lucknow Pact” and the method of representation on legisla-



tive and other bodies. It was therefore adjourned *sine die*. The consideration of the Swaraj scheme had therefore to be dropped as without communal agreement, no such scheme could be given effect to.

Thus the efforts of the All-Parties Conference failed. Mrs. Besant then felt herself free to push her Commonwealth of India Bill. She, however, incorporated in the Bill certain features outlined by the Swaraj Group. It is unfortunate that Gandhiji and the Congress leaders did not understand the importance and usefulness of the Commonwealth of India Bill and, therefore, did not give her the support which would have been most useful.

Earlier in January, 1925, Mrs. Besant delivered three Kamala lectures on "Ideals of Education" at the University of Calcutta. The first lecture on the "Commonwealth of India Bill" was also given by her on the visit to Calcutta. Travelling from Calcutta and Delhi via Benares she met Lord Reading and gave him a copy of the Draft Commonwealth of India Bill. The Commonwealth of India Bill was finally adopted at the three days' sitting of the National Convention at Kanpur on April 11-13, 1925. I attended this Conference and among those who took an active part in the final deliberations were Mrs. Besant, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru, and Pandit Iqbal Narain Gurtu.

In May the Commonwealth of India Bill was sent to Major D. Graham Pole, the Hon. Secretary of the British Committee on Indian Affairs in England. The leading members of the Labour Party supported it and it was read for the first time in the House of Commons and ordered to be printed. The Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party thoroughly examined it, in details, clause by clause, and finally passed it unanimously as embodying the resolutions passed by the Labour Party from time to time respecting India. This historical fact of the British Labour Party adopting the Commonwealth of India Bill has to be emphasized. It was due to the single-handed efforts of Mrs. Besant that the British Labour Party took interest in the Indian affairs. The Bill thus passed into the hands of the future Labour Government and was put on the list of Bills ballotted for as an official measure. Forty prominent Indian leaders issued in London a Memorandum. It

explained the urgent need of passing the Bill. The Memorandum condemned scathingly the British rule and the attitude of the British Government.

Mrs. Besant, after extensively touring India, sailed for England on 4th July with Lady Emily Lutyens, to do more propaganda work and to win more support for the Bill from the British M.P.s. She also toured Europe. She did not forget me. I had undergone a major operation on 16th July and she wrote to me from Hamburg, Germany on 8th August:

"Just one word of sympathy with you for the suffering you have undergone and your enforced idleness, so far as the body is concerned. I do hope it will result in renewed strength and vigour.

"At the moment I am in Hamburg, presiding over the German Convention. We are having most satisfactory meetings. Tomorrow night, we go to Ommen (Holland) Mrs. Cannan, Esther Bright, Miss Chambers and myself—as I promised Krishnaji to look after it for him."

Mrs. Besant returned to India late in November, 1925 and presided at the 50 years' Jubilee Convention of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. Mrs. Ruttie Jinnah came with me to Adyar to attend this Convention.

On 7th February, Mrs. Besant delivered in Bombay a public lecture on "Is Coalition of Parties Possible". Mrs. Besant said the question as to the possibility of a coalition between the various political parties in India was one of supreme importance. She deplored the apathy and the lack of enthusiasm for liberty among Indians at that time and said if they had only consulted together, formulated their demand and presented it to Parliament, such a thing could not be denied. The Labour Party had accepted the Commonwealth of India Bill as an official measure. It was not enough to shout out for Swaraj; they had to realise that no one would listen to them unless they clearly stated what they meant by Swaraj, until the labour of constitution was gone through. She submitted that there were two things on which they might join—they could either support a constitutional measure for the attainment of Swaraj or might all unite to press on their members the adoption of the method of responsive co-operation rather than do nothing or indulge in occasional obstruction. Mrs. Besant declared that she be-

lieved in India's future and that they could win Swaraj if only they would forget the petty quarrels and move like one man in their determination to win freedom. She said the coalition of parties to win freedom was eminently desirable and ought to be possible for men and women with hearts and wills. India's freedom had become a matter of life and death for her and Mrs. Besant hoped they would not rest nor stop until India was free.

M. R. Jayakar who presided supported the Commonwealth of India Bill and suggested that the Bill contained the rudiments of Swaraj in a manner which very few constitution-makers had had the courage to lay down.

On 9th February, Mrs. Besant spoke on "The First Years of Life" at the inauguration of the National Baby Week of which I was the Secretary, the Governor of Bombay, Sir Leslie Wilson, presiding.

On February 14, 1926, a Commonwealth of India Bill Conference was held in Karachi (then a part of Bombay Presidency) and again on May 7, another Commonwealth of India Bill Conference was held at Bombay. Mrs. Naidu presided and N. C. Kelkar was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. He paid a tribute to Dr. Besant as the "only influential and active advocate of the cause of India in England." He welcomed the signs of reaction from the aversion to foreign propaganda that prevailed during the days of Non-co-operation.

Referring to the Bill, he said it should not be looked down upon because it took the form of constitutional agitation. None except a mere dreamer could hope for an immediate accident which might give them self-Government without the agency of Parliament. The Bill was after all a token demand and they should welcome the Bill for two special reasons, firstly because it gave a stunning reply to the objection that the demand of India for self-Government was a vague one, and secondly, because the Bill opened up a vista of constructive thought in the wilderness of non-co-operation through which they had passed.

Mrs. Naidu said that the Bill in her opinion embodied the essence of the Indian demand and that was why she supported it. She emphasised the necessity of international propaganda.

Mrs. Besant left for England in May and after a lecturing tour in U.K. went to the U.S.A. in August, to place India's case

before the American public and thereby counteract the anti-India propaganda of Lord Sydenham and his group.

After her lecture tour through the United States, she along with Lady Emily Lutyens spent a few quiet months with Krishnamurti at Ohai, California, and returned to England in April 1927.

On July 26, 1927, was celebrated at a dinner the foundation of the Malthusian League. The "Star", London, said: "Dr. Annie Besant is to be the guest of honour at a dinner to be given at the Holborn Restaurant next Tuesday in celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the famous trial in which she and Charles Bradlaugh, the famous M.P., were prosecuted for publishing Dr. Charles Knowlton's pamphlet, "The Fruits of Philosophy". One of the results of the trial was the formation of the Malthusian League, of the original group of which Mrs. Besant is the only survivor.

This will make the third function in which Dr. Annie Besant, who is an octogenarian, takes a prominent part in a week, the others being the Indian Commonwealth League reception (at which she was the guest of honour).....and the Fellowship of Faiths meeting tomorrow."

"New India" which was being published in Madras for so many years and edited by Mrs. Besant was transferred to Bombay during her absence from India, my brother Jamnadas taking up the editorship. Jamnadas resigned the editorship and Mrs. Besant wrote to me from London on 9th June:

"Will you help me by becoming Assistant Editor, and seeing the paper through the Press? Shiva Rao will control the political side."

The following notice signed by her was published in *New India* of which I became the publisher and Assistant Editor:

"Owing to certain difficulties, which are, I hope, temporary, my Co-Editor, Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas, has placed his resignation in my hands, I have appointed Mr. Shiva Rao, M.A., to take his place; his sound political knowledge is well known both in India and in Britain, and he can efficiently fill the post. I shall myself be returning to India in October.

"I have asked Mr. Kanji Dwarkadas whose admirable work in Municipal and social reform matters is well known, to act as Assistant Editor, as Mr. Shiva Rao is already heavily worked

in Madras Trade Unionism."

On 26th August, she wrote to me from Ommen, Holland:

"Thank you very much for the ready help that you gave in relation to *New India*. Altogether, I think it would have been very difficult for Shiva Rao to find time to edit it efficiently, if it were carried on at such a distance as Bombay.

I was very glad to see Mrs. Naidu's poem and also to hear that she had promised to write for *New India* now and then. It is also very good that she is taking a keen interest in the work of the Children's Aid Society, for she will be able to influence many, as you say, and it is essential for the success of such a movement that large numbers of public should support it.

"I should very much like to travel back with Sapru, but it is just a question of whether we can get tickets for the 6th October."

Mrs. Besant returned to India after fifteen months' absence at the end of October, 1927.

Mrs. Besant took the paper "New India" back to Adyar, Madras and resumed its editorship.

The six years—1922 to 1927—were the busiest years for Mrs. Besant in her great work for Home Rule for India. She laboured hard and concentrated on the drafting of the Commonwealth of India Bill in which so many prominent Indians like Tej Bahadur Sapru, C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, M. R. Jayakar, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, N. C. Kelkar co-operated wholeheartedly.

George Lansbury introduced the Commonwealth of India Bill as a private Bill. It was read for a first time and ordered to be printed. It was unanimously recommended to His Majesty's Opposition for recognition as an official Bill. Before its first reading, the Rt. Hon. Sir Henry Slessor, the Solicitor General in the late Labour Government and the leading Parliamentary Draftsman, made technical corrections in the Bill and put it into Parliamentary language. Ramsay MacDonald, then Leader of the Opposition, speaking in the House of Commons and flourishing the Commonwealth of India Bill which he was holding in his hand said on 2nd July 1928: "I hope that within a period of months rather than years, there will be a new Dominion added to the Commonwealth of our Nations, a Dominion of another race, a Dominion that will find self-respect as an equal within

the Commonwealth: I refer to India."

In 1929, Mrs. Besant told me "India has won her freedom. There is no going back on that but the date when freedom comes is in India's hands. If India is wise and acts correctly, India can get that freedom within a year or two. If she is stupid and fritters away her energies in wrongful channels, then the day of freedom will be put off. But inspite of all that, the freedom is coming and India has just to take it".

Yes, India was stupid and the freedom which we could have gained by 1931 was kept off till 1947 and then when it came, it came through the division of India into India and Pakistan.

The following are some of the main features of the Commonwealth of India Bill.

### *General Principles*

1. India will be placed on an equal footing with the self-governing Dominions, sharing their responsibilities and their privileges.

2. The right of self-Government will be exercised from the Village (Grām or Mauzā) upwards in each successive autonomous area of wider extent, namely: the Talukā (or Tehsil or sub-District), the District (or Zillā), the province (or Rāshtra) excluding the Indian States.

3. The three great spheres of activity, Legislative, Executive, and Judicial will, as far as possible, be independent of each other, while correlated in their working.

### *Declaration of Rights*

4. The following Fundamental Rights will be guaranteed to every person:

- (a) Inviolability of the liberty of the person and of his dwelling and property.
- (b) Freedom of conscience and the free practice of religion, subject to public order or morality.
- (c) Free expression of opinion and the right of assembly peaceably and without arms, and of forming Associations or Unions, subject to public order or morality.
- (d) Free Elementary Education as soon as practicable.
- (e) The use of roads, places dedicated to the public, Courts

of Justice, and the like.

- (f) Equality before Law, irrespective of considerations of Nationality, and
- (g) Equality of sexes.

### *Legislative*

5. There will be two Chambers in the Commonwealth Parliament, namely, the Legislative Assembly and the Senate. The Legislative Assembly will consist of 300 Members and the Senate of 150.

6. The Senate will have equal powers with the Legislative Assembly except in regard to Money Bills, which will originate only in the latter. The life of the Legislative Assembly will be for 5 years and that of the Senate for 6 years, but the Assembly can be dissolved sooner by the Viceroy, while, the Senate will have a continuous existence, with half the number of members retiring every three years by a process of rotation.

7. In the Provinces, the number of Members will vary from 100 to 200 according to the size and importance of the Province. The life of a Legislative Council will ordinarily be for 4 years, unless it is dissolved sooner by the Governor. There will be at present only one Chamber in the Provincial Legislatures but provision has been made in the Bill for the addition of a Second Chamber in a Province, if it so decides. In the District Samiti, Taluka Sabhā and the Village Panchayat, which are termed the Sub-Provincial Units of Government, the number of Members will vary according to local conditions. The ordinary life-term of the District Samiti will be for three years, that of the Taluka Sabhā for two years and that of the Village Panchayat for a year.

8. The Franchises for the various Legislative bodies have been graded, commencing with universal adult suffrage in the village, and restricted by higher educative, administrative, property or other monetary qualification in the case of each higher body. The principle of direct election has been maintained throughout, except in the case of the Senate, where candidates will be nominated to a panel from which the electorate will make its choice. A distinction has also been observed between Members and Electors, the qualifications for the former being kept at a somewhat higher level than for the latter.

9. The powers of the various Legislative bodies have been embodied in a Schedule to the Constitution; and residuary powers have been vested in the Commonwealth Parliament.

*Defence and Foreign Affairs*

10. Reservation has been made as regards Defence and Foreign Affairs. There will be a Defence Commission with a majority of Indians thereon, every five years, appointed by the Viceroy in consultation with the Cabinet. The Commission will recommend a minimum of non-votable expenditure for the Defence Forces. In the event of disagreement, the Viceroy will have power to secure the minimum which, in his opinion, is necessary for the Defence Forces. But no revenue of India may be spent on any branch of the Forces in which Indians are ineligible for holding Commissioned rank. As soon as the Commission recommends favourably, the Commonwealth Parliament may pass an Act to undertake the full responsibility of Defence.

*Executive*

11. There will be a Cabinet in the Government of India consisting of the Prime Minister and not less than 7 Ministers of State, who will be collectively responsible for the administration of the Commonwealth. The Prime Minister will be appointed by the Viceroy and the other Ministers on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Viceroy will be temporarily in charge of the Defence Forces of the Commonwealth. In all matters except as regards Defence, the Viceroy will act only upon the advice of the Cabinet. The salaries of the Viceroy and of the Members of the Cabinet will be fixed by the Parliament of the Commonwealth; but in the case of the former no alteration will come into force during his continuance in office. The Cabinet will resign as soon as it has lost the support of a majority in the Legislative Assembly, unless the latter be dissolved.

12. In the Provinces, the same principles will apply as in the Government of the Commonwealth, except that the minimum number of Ministers will be three.

13. The powers and functions of the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State in Council over the revenues and the administration of India will be transferred to the Commonwealth Executive.



*Judicial*

14. There will be a Supreme Court of India, consisting of a Chief Justice and not less than two other Judges, with original as well as appellate jurisdiction to deal with such matters as may be determined by statute. It will have power to deal with all matters arising out of the interpretation of the Constitution or of laws made by the Commonwealth Parliament. It will also be the final appellate authority in India, unless it certifies that the question is one which should be determined by the Privy Council.

15. The existing High Courts will have the same powers and authority as before the establishment of the Commonwealth.

*Finance*

16. The revenues of the Commonwealth will form a consolidated revenue fund, and will be vested in the Viceroy. No revenue may be raised by the Executive without the sanction of Parliament.

17. No money may be drawn from the treasury of the Commonwealth except with the consent of Parliament.

18. The allocation of revenues between the Commonwealth and Provinces will be decided by a Finance Commission every five years. There will be absolute freedom of trade, Commerce and intercourse between the Provinces.

*New Provinces*

19. Parliament will have the power to alter the limits of the existing Provinces or establish new Provinces and make laws for their administration. But in every case, the consent of the Provinces, or the area concerned, will be necessary before any alteration is made.

*Minorities*

20. Communal Representation as now existing will be abolished; and all elections will be held on the basis of purely territorial electorates. As a temporary measure, the number of seats now reserved for Mussalmans and Europeans will be guaranteed for five years, at the end of which period the question of its continuance, modification or abolition will be examined

by a Franchise Commission.

Bills affecting the religion or the religious rites or usages of a community or communities will be referred to a Special Committee of Legislature in which there will be a majority of the members of the community or communities concerned, and if the Committee reports adversely, such Bills will lapse for the period of one year.

### *Public Services*

21. There will be a Public Services Commission to exercise full control over the Public Services of India as regards recruitment, discipline, promotion and pensions. Officers now in the service of the Government of India or of the Provincial Governments will be guaranteed their existing rights, but at the establishment of the Commonwealth, they will pass into the service of the Commonwealth or the Province, as the case may be.

### *Alteration of the Constitution*

22. Parliament will have the power to alter the Constitution in the manner prescribed in the Bill.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### MRS. BESANT FIFTY YEARS' PUBLIC SERVICE 1874-1924

#### QUEEN'S HALL CELEBRATION

MRS. BESANT wrote in the "Theosophist" of Feb. 1924:

"On August 25 I complete fifty years of public life for on that day (in 1874) I delivered my first public lecture on "The Political Status of Women", marking my entrance into the open propaganda of Political Reforms. On August 30, 1874, I wrote my first article in the "National Reformer" under the name of "Ajax". Fifty years! it is a short time to look back upon, but a long time to live through."

On 23rd July, a public demonstration took place in the Queen's Hall, London, to celebrate Mrs. Besant's fifty years of public service.

She wrote in a "Message to those who are young today":

"Look forward to a future full of nobler tasks that you may do, that we have left undone; full of greater causes that you may serve, that we have not been able to find; for humanity is ever rising higher and higher when her children serve her generation after generation; for the world renews her youth and the age that is behind gives birth to the age that is to come. And some have said that I am young. Yes! Because there is no age for those who strive to live in the eternal."

This Queen's Hall demonstration in London was a landmark in the long life and public service—she was 77—of Mrs. Besant, and it showed the great affection and respect with which she was held by her friends and co-workers of the present and the past. The large audience of over 2,000 at the Queen's Hall included 500 delegates from many and varied organizations, representing almost every branch of progressive

work in the world, including the Labour Party and some thirty-four branches, the Independent Labour Party, the Fabian Society, The International Suffrage Alliance, the National Federation of Women Workers, the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organizations, the Women's International League, The League of Nations Union, the Parliamentary Labour Club, Youth Movements, The Theosophical Society, the Co-Masonic Order, etc., etc.

The speakers were representative of the social, religious and political work in which Mrs. Besant was at that time or had been in the past engaged: George Lansbury, Earl de La Warr, Srinivas Sastri, Miss Margaret Bondfield, George Arundale, Dr. Haden Guest, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, Dr. Marion Phillip, Ben Tillete, B. Turner and John Scurr.

In the absence of Lord Chancellor Lord Haldane, Major David Graham Pole, her trusted friend and colleague, presided.

Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, Lord Haldane, Philip Snowden, Chancellor of Exchequer, Baden-Powell and Lord Willingdon sent messages. Regretting their inability to attend the meeting, they paid high tributes to the great services of Mrs. Besant.

George Lansbury, M.P., said:

"I always like being among young people, and whenever I meet Dr. Besant I always go away with a great deal more enthusiasm and determination to carry on than before, because she seems to me always an example of downright hopefulness; she never, never, under the most difficult of circumstances, she never loses heart but hopes on, always certain somewhere, some time, the harvest of the work people are doing must be reaped. That always is an inspiration to anyone engaged in the work of advancement in this country.

"I remember the days when she heartened not only the match girls but dockers in the East End. Long before the Dockers' Strike of 1889 there had been some very intensive work done, and one of the bravest, who went in the early mornings down to the dock gates to organise men who sometimes earned 4d. a day, was our friend and colleague, Annie Besant.

"Then I remember that in my youth I was brought up to try to understand all the different points of view about religions, and I remember that the days when Gladstone and Huxley

were arguing about the Gadarene when all the churches were ringing with denunciations of Darwin, I remember that all at once there came into our lives this new sort of prophet—a woman—which was something extraordinary in those days, who could make herself understood in a manner that most of the persons were unable to make themselves understood.

"I learned in that famous School Board Election from her that no country, no nation, no race, no sect has all the truth in the world, and that no matter how long we live we must go on learning, and no matter how dogmatic we may have been we should always have courage enough to see the truth when it flashes across our minds. I think there is no one in our country who has more courageously stood for conscience, and the right of conscience, to determine its own belief than the friend we are doing honour to to-night. And that is a very great thing in my judgment, if not the greatest thing in public life.

"I can never come into contact with Annie Besant, or at a meeting like this and hearing her cheered and good things said about her, without remembering that occasion down in the East End of London when very, very poor people gathered in Poplar Town Hall to bid her good bye when she was going to India. All our hearts were sad, and I remember saying—and I want to say it to everybody here—'If we are going to carry on the work she has been doing all these years, the only way to do it is to have the same impersonal feeling towards the movement with which we are associated she has always shown.' We should honour her by trying to follow in her footsteps, to hold up the banner of Truth and Liberty wherever we find ourselves, and irrespective of what it may bring us. Only a few years ago this woman was in an Indian prison—not because she had done anything criminal, not because she had outraged any real human law, but because she was standing up for a race of people which her own people were holding in subjection. I hope everyone of us will carry on her work, and at all costs stand for the true principles of Freedom, Equality, and Liberty the wide world over."

Ben Turner, M.P., representing the British Trades Union Congress and Editor of the "Daily Herald" said:

"Forty five years ago, as a young fellow then, and a younger man now, I had the privilege of hearing Annie Besant speak

in Huddersfield. She was the finest woman I had ever heard. My admiration has continued from then until now. I remember when she wrote in the newspapers, when she edited 'Our Corner', a long-forgotten publication. In all her efforts, she was trying to bring the young people along in the right way. I also remember her as editor of one of the finest song-books; that is also forgotten. I remember her also as a poetess. All the time she has been struggling for freedom and fellowship, the two things which make life possible and make life pleasant. Of course, in those days she was also a political heretic, a down-right one, because 'The Marseillaise' was not in it in those days, when she stood out as a republican. I remember Annie Besant fighting for forlorn and unpopular causes, but they seem in these days to have become successful causes, and I am glad to be here, both from the Trade Union Congress, and as Chairman of that little fighting paper "The Daily Herald" to add our tribute to the work and worth of Mrs. Besant".

Dr. Haydon Guest, M.P. said: "I am, quite frankly, a mystic, as a theosophist, trying to follow my leader, Dr. Besant, and I believe in the truth of the vision that she preaches. We all know her as an orator, the greatest, I believe, in the world today. Do we know as a statesman, I believe one of the greatest in the world today—who understands the problem not only of India but the problem of this Empire of ours, of this great World-Empire, as few people living today do understand it. Those great plans revealed by Dr. Besant will, I am certain, be as fruitful in the future as her work in the past for men and women in the Trade Union movement."

Ben Tillette, M.P., said: "Annie Besant is a very old comrade. I knew her in the early period of her great intellectual life, and I have great admiration for her. I was associated with her in the early days in forlorn hopes. I know I addressed myself to the great orators then, even to Mr. Gladstone, who sent me a post card to say he was too busy. I was living on my soul, believing everybody else had nothing to do but to come along and help me. I was fighting for the bottom dog, and outside of three persons I had no encouragement whatever. One of the three was Charles Bradlaugh. Another was Cardinal Manning. And the Third was my dear friend, Annie Besant. I got her to come to the docks, and I am not exaggerating when I say she

spoke to 6,000 men on a foggy morning without seeing six out of the 6,000. She spoke into the mist words of love, of mothering, of comfort, of hope, joy and courage. Of all the great, the glorious work in the very great life of our dear sister, I claim her few words, her few meetings, her few actions did as much as anything to make the Labour movement which flourishes to-day and a Labour Government which presumes to rule—well guarded by the servants of the Capital; that amongst the men and women I have associated with I know of no great heart, no great intelligence, that has done more to inspire the world of Labour than the dear woman we are speaking of tonight. I am speaking very freely because we won't spoil her, we cannot spoil, she is true gold right the way through.

"I remember one of the visits after a sojourn in India, we got her down to Poplar, and I was very full of the progress we had made in science, Chemistry and other things, and I remember this gentle-voiced woman just telling me off quietly: there was nothing sinister, it was so beautifully done that really I did not in the least feel I had fallen one inch less in stature. In the days when we were fighting for the bottom dog there was not a newspaper, not a pulpit, not a platform but what denied our right to speak—but we are living now in days of great respectability. The change has been brought about by the work of this great woman with the mother-heart, with the mother-brain, with the mother-instinct, that has lived a life as wide as the world itself—whose eyes seen into the slums of Western civilisation and glanced into the nakedness of Eastern Civilisation. Whatever has been her work, one has always felt, Here is a true soul, that shall live not, possibly, in memory but her work shall live—her work shall live not in monuments of stone but in the monumental progress she has helped to bring."

Mrs. Pethwick Lawrence, referring to the Suffragist Movement of 1911, said:

"May I give you my particularly vivid, outstanding memory? The date, 17th June, 1911 the place, the Royal Albert Hall: 75,000 women have marched in procession through the streets of London, in order to express their determination to have a share in the moulding of the world in which they live: Dr. Annie Besant has left her immediate work and is standing there, in order to stand side by side with the women who were

working for their freedom. And this is her opening sentence: 'Do not think that we are here tonight to support a women's movement; it is not a women's movement; it is a human movement. Men and women cannot be separated into two distinct halves; there is one humanity.' As I have listened to the speeches tonight, this seems to me to be the key-note unfolding the whole story of Dr. Besant's life and work. One humanity, whether it has been fighting in an economic movement, or a religious movement, or a thought movement, whether a political movement, a racial movement, or for international brotherhood, always, as the underlying thought has been. There is but one humanity. Dr. Besant, you have seen many gulfs close as the result of your work. There are many more which yet divide humanity, but the world has gone forth. All sections of humanity are progressing towards that one life from which we all spring. And you are one of the mighty messengers of that world."

Sriniwas Sastri was the last speaker. He said:

"Before I came to this meeting, I thought I knew somewhat of Dr. Besant. Now, after hearing the speeches that have been made, I feel I know very little of her, and indeed am fitted to know little. It is wonderful what we have heard of Dr. Besant's record. It is an imposing record of achievements, any single one of which would have turned our heads. My narrow canvas cannot catch her immense personality. A great scientist, Lord Kelvin, speaking on an occasion in his life exactly similar to that which we are celebrating in Dr. Besant's, described himself as a person who had failed. I suppose these great specimens of humanity that descend occasionally on this earth of ours march from hill-top to hill-top, striding on from one peak of achievement to another. They seem marvellous to us, but, who knows, they may be constantly thinking of some unconquered and unconquerable Everest in respect of which they may be compelled to describe themselves as failures. I will not be so daring as to question her on the subject. But, if I did, and Dr. Besant told me she was a failure, I would refuse to believe her. She has been, if I may say so, a splendid, unparalleled triumph of human effort. Not in small or mean causes, but in great, glorious Causes, which might lead, who knows, to one vast comprehensive synthesis of our countries, in which man



shall embrace truly as Brother, in which all distinctions shall be forgotten, in which the principles of Theosophy shall reconcile all regions, and marked shall sit instructed, purified, and dignified at the feet of great Teachers like Dr. Besant.

"I have known some of Dr. Besant's rare work in the field of Indian Education. It has been my proud privilege to be associated with her in later years in her political work. It would be impossible for me to attempt to enumerate her great achievements. It is not, however, her great outward achievements which appeal to my imagination, but rather the magnificent lessons that she has taught by her powerful example. Some of the speakers have referred to the consuming energy, to the enormous work she turns out. I remember speaking to a friend, supposed in himself to be an example of American push and ambition, and asking him to accept a post as Secretary in an organisation of which Dr. Besant was to be the life and soul. He simply refused, and when pressed he said: "You are talking of Dr. Besant as a colleague. She is a gigantic, pitiless machine, once you are caught up within it there is no rest, no peace."

When Dr. Besant took up political work in India, we understood for the first time what sustained, persevering, high hearted political work really meant. Since she took it up, many things have been done in India, and it is simply marvellous the change that one far-seeing personality can make upon circumstances which seemed to others absolutely resistless.

There are many things which strike one about Dr. Besant's work. Shall I describe to you her wonderful power of choosing her followers? The marvellous personal attachment that she feels for those who assist her and those who feel for her? The immense sacrifices which she cheerfully bears? The way in which she supports a friend apparently fallen on evil times? The courage against opposition which she brings to support a Cause which, for the moment, seems to be engulfed in storms? No, it is impossible. But I will say one thing, of all her qualities that which sometimes overpowers my imagination is this: with magnificent devotion, and tireless energy she builds up some piece of work; then, the truth strikes her that that piece of work has outlived its usefulness, Ishvara has no further use for it in the scheme of the world. Then the complete resigna-

tion to the will of the Almighty with which she lays that work by, and applies herself with the same marvellous devotion to another piece of work—that strikes me sometimes as her greatest contribution to the art of politics in the world.

India today feels towards her as she rarely has felt towards other public workers and teachers. Great teacher, great worker, great patriot, valiant soldier of truth and justice, undaunted champion of causes, which seem to droop, but in her hands are destined to rise triumphant for the glory of God and Man. India, through me, pays humble homage to her career."

Mrs. Besant made a magnificent inspiring reply:

"Friends, it is very difficult for me to speak after I have stood—or rather sat—here listening to all the generous and loving words that have been spoken to me to-night. And as one old friend has spoken of after another, with whom it had been my privilege and my happiness to work, as allusions were made to Charles Bradlaugh—to Herbert Burrows—and to so many with whose friendship I have been blessed, and who have passed out of the physical side but still remain the living souls I know. The Hall has almost seemed to be more full of the invisible than of the visible, crowding to give one word of cheer to an Old Comrade whom they have left behind. And then my thoughts ran back to the days when I was still a child, and when—for I was a child fond of reading heroic stories, stories of great fights for truth; for justice and for freedom—my heart used to sink within me as I thought, 'The heroic days are over, and there is nothing left to look forward to, of struggle, of heroism, of noble work'—for so the children dream! And I would say to those of you who are young today: Look forward to in future full of nobler tasks that you may do, that we have left undone: full of greater causes that you may serve, that we have not been able to find: for humanity is ever young, though men and women may grow old, and humanity is ever rising higher and higher when her children serve her generation after generation: for the world renews her youth and the age that is behind gives birth to the age that is to come. And some have said that I am young. Yes! Because there is no age for those who strive to live in the Eternal.

Some have spoken to-night about work, and sacrifice; but I wonder whether all of you know, as I know, now that my body

is old, that there is no joy like the joy of sacrifice for a great cause? That there is no sorrow in it, but the bliss which comes from the privilege of working for that which is greater than one's self. And I remember—in those days when I had lost the faith of my childhood and had not yet reached onward to the greater faith that I embraced one-and-thirty years ago, and that grows for ever brighter and brighter, more certain and more certain as the years go on—I remember when Herbert Burrows and myself were walking in London streets, going back from a meeting of omnibus-men who had no time to join and work and plan for shorter hours, and we could only find them about mid-night, and as we tramped through the snow and the mud, I turned to him and said: 'Herbert, I wonder why on earth we go on doing this,' and his answer was: "We can't help it!" And in that there is a great truth, for the God who unfolds within us pushes us onwards even when our eyes are blinded to His Glory and it is He who is the only worker, He who is the only sacrifice, He who living in our hearts is the only that is true, then it is that we know that nothing that our bodies and our brains and our hearts can do is our work at all, for all work is His alone and there is none other. And we realize that we work in His power and He is never weak; in His strength, and He is never feeble; in His Youth, the strong immortal Youth who never grows old. And I would say to every one of you that that power dwells within you, and that Strength is the strength of the Divine Spirit and the body is only the temple of the Living God; and then you will realise that it is not you that work, but it is He! It is not you who plan, but He who plans, and that all you have to do is to make yourselves a channel for that mighty Life in which the Universe is living. And who shall dare to say that any one in whom that Life abides—and He abides in every one of you—that you cannot make a new Heaven and a new Earth by the Christ and the God within you, for whom alone you can ever be strong, by whom alone you can ever conquer the obstacles in the way.

And that would be my word to the young and the old among you: Trust the Divine Life within you and the Divine Life within your fellow men, realise that it is in you and you will see it is in everyone around you. Then you will doubt no longer.

And—if I may finish with words which I believe to be intensely true, and that are so often only half said—when Kipling spoke about the East and the West and “never the twain shall meet”, he went on to say:—

“But there is neither East nor West,

Border, nor Breed nor Birth,

When two strong men stand face to face,

Though they come from the ends of the earth.”

And that is true, whether they be from Britain or from India. Whether it be from one side of the world to the other, there is only One life, and we are one in Him, and we shall bring the outer lands together because the Inner Life is ever one.

Friends, I thank you.”

## CHAPTER XXIV

### JINNAH—1924 - 1929 SIMON COMMISSION & BOYCOTT

**AFTER** his unsuccessful attempt in January 1922, to arrange with Lord Reading a Round Table Conference on the lines of the offer which the Viceroy had made to Gandhiji late in December, 1921, and which offer Gandhiji had turned down, Jinnah withdrew from politics and went full speed ahead with his practice at the bar. His argument was that it was a waste of effort and time to participate in politics when both sides—Congress on the one hand and the Government on the other—were unreasonable, and were not inclined to come to terms with each other. Jinnah bided his time. The N.C.O. and the Khilafat Movements having failed, Jinnah got himself elected in November, 1923, to the Central Legislative Assembly. He, as a leader of the Independent Block, consisting of 28 members, worked whole-heartedly in co-operation with the 42 members of the Swaraj Party, of which Motilal Nehru was the leader. They did excellent work, were both members of the Muddiman Reforms Committee, joined together in getting the Steel Protection Bill passed, and the opposition in the Assembly led by Motilal and Jinnah was effective in defeating Government's reactionary policies. Jinnah continued to be the great nationalist and not only led the progressive section of the Muslims but also had a large Hindu following.

When the non-co-operation and Khilafat movements were going strong, the Muslim League remained dormant from 1921 to 1924. But once those movements were no longer strong and effective, the Muslim League revived its activities in Lahore at its fifteenth session in May, 1924. Jinnah, then fifty, was its President and acknowledged leader. Jinnah said that the N.C.O. movement was a failure, and much harm was done. But some good had resulted from it by way of mass awakening,

asking for Swaraj for India. It has created a fearless and persistent demand for the immediate establishment of Dominion Responsible Government in India. The ordinary man in the street is politically conscious. He has realised that self-respect and honour of the country demand that this Government should not be in the hands of any one else except the people of the country. He said the speedy attainment of Swaraj was one of the declared objects of the League. The advent of foreign rule and its continuance in India was primarily due to the fact that the people of India, particularly the Hindus and Muslims, were not united and did not sufficiently trust each other. He was almost inclined to say that India would get Dominion Responsible Government the day the Hindus and Muslims were united. He laid down some basic and fundamental principles in any constitution for India acceptable to the Muslims.

He suggested :

(1) A Federal Constitution with full autonomy for the Provinces, the functions of the Central Government being confined to matters of general and common concern.

(2) He asked for adequate and effective representation to minorities in every Province by way of separate electorates *for the present*.

Jinnah added that the Reforms of the Montague Act of 1919 were inadequate and unsatisfactory and steps should be taken immediately to establish full responsible Government.

On July 12, 1925, Jinnah wrote an important letter to Jayakar:

"I think that the Swarajists must not allow the blame to be laid at their door. It will be a pity if we allow the Government to say 'nothing doing', as the Swarajists refuse to co-operate. You have to make it clear that the Swarajists are willing to co-operate—that they are willing to accept office and to work the present constitution, for what it is worth, if the Government will declare at once that they are prepared to revise and review the Constitution and appoint a Royal Commission with a personnel acceptable to the people and such as will command the confidence of the people. Birkenhead's suggestion in his speech that the Government, and the Secretary of State and the Royal Commission, if appointed, will consider any proposals and schemes if supported by the people generally, is to my mind, made by him

in the hope that we shall not agree on any one scheme and so it must not be emphasized. The thing to insist on is that we must get the Government to agree to the following:

- (1) to be clear that the Constitution must be revised;
- (2) that a Royal Commission must be appointed at once;
- (3) with satisfactory personnel.

We may declare that we are willing to work in the meanwhile and co-operate, notwithstanding our opinion that the present Constitution is defective and cannot yield results.

In the event of this understanding being arrived at, Swarajists must take up Ministries, for instance in Bengal and C.P. political prisoners must be released and the question of revision proceeded with in an atmosphere of harmony and co-operation. It will be, in my opinion, as great a mistake as was made in 1921-22 by Gandhi, when he turned down and refused the offer of Lord Reading for a Round Table Conference and the responsibility to-day will be of the Swaraj Party if any other position is taken up. I, therefore, trust that the Swaraj Party will not stultify itself and the rest of the parties."

In 1926, a book of important investments was published in Calcutta giving names of ten biggest investors in some of the important joint Stock Companies. Jinnah's name appeared in three such companies—Tata Steel, Bombay Dyeing and Tramways and his investments in those three concerns totalled up to 14 lakhs at the prices *then* ruling. How these shares appreciated in value during the next 20 years, it is hardly necessary to say. Jinnah was never a gambler or a speculator. He was a most cautious investor. He abhorred speculation and gambling. Jinnah lived well and spent well. One may ask how much money did Jinnah leave on his death. It must have been crores, taxes then being not what they are now! Jinnah bequeathed in his will—Jinnah's biographer Bolitho told me—Rs. 6 lakhs to the Aligarh University, but this money has never been claimed either by the Aligarh University or by the Government of India: This will was made before Pakistan came into being. Is it not an indication that Jinnah did not expect even to get Pakistan through the division of this country into India and Pakistan?

In February, 1925, Motilal Nehru and Jinnah were among others appointed to the Committee which was to advise on the 'Indianization' of the army and the establishment of a military

Training College, on the pattern of Sandhurst, but Motilal after a few months of work resigned. Jinnah used all his great skill and powers of cross-examination for which he was well-known in High Court, to get facts from the British Officers who gave evidence. The British Officers resented this kind of cross-examination and among those who objected to Jinnah's methods of taking evidence was General Sir Douglas Gracey. They did not bear resentment to each other and it is interesting to note that Jinnah, as the Governor-General of Pakistan, appointed in 1948 Sir Douglas as the Commander-in-Chief of Pakistan Army.

In 1926, Jinnah went to Europe and U.S.A. as a Member of the Skeene (Sandhurst) Committee. Ruttie went with him. One of the achievements of this Committee was the establishment of the Military College at Dehra Dun.

Jinnah's attitude towards all problems of India was one of progress and reform. He supported all labour and social reform legislations that came before the Assembly. He supported the Maternity Benefits Act as also the raising of the age of consent. Jinnah was never a reactionary in politics and social reforms.

In 1926, Jinnah was a candidate for the Central Legislative Assembly from the Mohammedan Constituency in Bombay. He was over-confident of success and took no pains to organise an election campaign. Ruttie, Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas and I were worried and amused at Jinnah's over-confidence because all the time Jinnah was saying "The electorate is on its trial". In the end, Sir Purshottamdas and I, therefore, canvassed for votes for him from the captains of a Steamship Company. What happened on the election day at the polling booths in the Town Hall and Umarkhadi is worth recording. Quite unasked, Jinnah's Hindu friends sent him at least 100 cars to enable him to get his Muslim voters to the polling booths. They wrote to him that owing to the Communal electorates, they could not cast their votes for him but they would at least do some service to the Motherland by helping him to win the election by giving him their cars. The rest of the story is told in my letter of the 7th November, 1945, to the "Bombay Chronicle":

"Will you please let me correct a mis-statement which appeared in Birbal's notes in the Chronicle of 3rd November? He says that about two decades ago, Mr. Hussenbhai Laljee who was contesting the election for the Mohammedan seat from the



City for the Central Legislative Assembly withdrew in favour of Mr. Jinnah in spite of the fact that he was winning the election. This is not true. These are the facts. There were three candidates—Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Salebhoy Barodawalla and Mr. Hussenhoy Laljee. By 10 in the morning, there was no doubt as to what the result would be, as for every ten votes that Mr. Jinnah was getting, the other two candidates were hardly getting four. Before mid-day, Mr. Barodawalla approached Mr. Jinnah and suggested that Mr. Jinnah should request him to withdraw as then it would make it easy for him to withdraw. Mr. Jinnah very politely said that it was not for him to ask him to withdraw and he did not mind his carrying on the fight till the end of the day. Within half an hour, Mr. Barodawalla withdrew. A little later, Mr. Hussenhoy Laljee who realised that Mr. Jinnah was scoring heavily, approached him with a request that he might be asked to withdraw. Mr. Jinnah told him to carry on and he would not ask him to withdraw. Votes were recorded right till late in the afternoon and Mr. Jinnah had a thumping majority against the two other candidates. The name "Birbal" connotes sense of humour and sense of proportion, an objective observer's point of view and fair-mindedness. I am afraid in the midst of the unfortunate political controversies of the day in India, Birbal is unfair to the name he has adopted. As it is there are enough dissensions and personal bickerings in the country. Is it right to make them worse by making statements which are not true? Surely Birbal would check up and verify his information."

Whilst Jinnah refused to canvass for himself, he went out of his way to throw all his weight in favour of Jayakar's candidature in non-Muslim Constituency of Bombay, Jayakar's rival candidate being Jamnadas Mehta. He addressed meeting after meeting for Jayakar and Jinnah having a great hold on the Hindu Community of Bombay—and this was right up to the time of partition—Jinnah was able to tilt the election in Jayakar's favour.

Jinnah's intention then was to be the leader of a new non-Congress non-Communal independent party in the Central Assembly and he thought Jayakar would certainly join him. But Jayakar unfortunately did not.

The emphasis in 1927 for the solution of the Hindu-Muslim unity problem was on joint electorates. There were several pri-

vate conferences in March 1927 in New Delhi. Also, there was another private conference of some Muslim leaders at Dr. Ansari's house. This was followed by a meeting of about 30 prominent Muslim leaders belonging to various groups. They included, Raja of Mahmudabad, Sir Mohd. Shaffi, Sir Abdul Qaiyum, Dr. Ansari, Maulana Mohammed Ali, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Maulana Mohamed Yakub. Jinnah presided. He told the meeting of the five tentative suggestions based on joint electorates sent to him by the Congress President, Srinivas Aiyangar. This all-Parties Muslim Conference agreed to the institution of joint electorates under certain conditions. A unanimous resolution was passed :

“Mohammedans should accept the settlement on the basis of the following proposals so far as representation in the legislatures in any future scheme of Constitution is concerned: (1) Sind should be separated from Bombay Presidency and constituted into a separate province. (2) Reforms should be introduced in N.W.F. Province and in Baluchistan on the same footing as any other province in India. In that case, Mohammedans are prepared to accept joint electorates in all provinces so constituted and are further willing to make to Hindu minorities in Bengal, the Punjab and N.W.F. the same concessions that Hindu majorities in other provinces are prepared to make to Mohammedan minorities. In the Punjab and Bengal, the proportion of representation should be in accordance with the population. In the Central Legislature, Mohammedan representation shall not be less than a third and that also by mixed electorates. These are subject to ratification by Mohammedan organisations concerned; but it is hoped by those present at the Conference that Hindus will accept and Mohammedans will ratify them.”

The Congress Working Committee which met the very next day responded favourably. The Committee recorded satisfaction at the resolution of the Mahommedans. Those present at this meeting of the Working Committee included the Congress President, Srinivas Aiyangar, A. Rangaswamy Aiyangar, Motilal Nehru, Mrs. Naidu, Dr. Ansari and T. Prakasham. The following resolution was passed :

“The Working Committee considered the report of the informal conference of the representative Mohammedan gentlemen

from all parts of India together with the proceedings at the meeting of the Hindu members of the Congress Party during the last week." A sub-Committee consisting of Srinivas Aiyangar, Motilal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu and Maulana Mohammed Ali was appointed to discuss details with the representatives of the Muslim Conference and of the Hindu Community.

Jinnah, a true and great nationalist that he was then, made a valiant effort to solve the Hindu-Muslim communal problem after obtaining with great effort a consensus of Muslim opinion of all shades. For India's sake, if not for his own, Jinnah deserved success. There was a glimmer of hope that in spite of all difficulties, a settlement could be arrived at to solve the Hindu-Muslim Political problem. Something tangible, it was hoped, would be done. But mischievous elements to prevent such rapprochement became extraordinarily active. The "Times of India" had a weekly feature—"Through Muslim Eyes" and published extracts from the Muslim Urdu papers of the most insignificant and unimportant type, with hardly any circulation. They did not in any way influence public opinion. Those papers were translated into English in the office of the Oriental Translator to the Government of Bombay, and supplied—I know what I am writing about—to the "Times of India". The intention of Government was clear enough—to foment trouble and excite religious and communal animosities.

As regards the "Bombay Chronicle" the Congress Paper, with an amiable and mild editor, Syed Abdullah Brelvi, it started a crusade against Jinnah, dubbing him a rank communalist. Jinnah, I submit, was not a communalist, but Brelvi, to curry favour with the Congress High Command, attributed all kinds of base motives to Jinnah and created suspicion against and hatred of him. I know Jinnah rightly resented these false aspersions against him. The consequences were, however, what the reactionaries on both sides, and the Government wanted. And these misunderstandings and misrepresentations went on for years and years.

The country's attention was once again diverted to another big problem created by the appointment by the British Government of an all-white Commission on Constitutional Reforms with Sir John Simon as its Chairman. This was announced by the Viceroy on 8th November 1927. Lord Winterton had toured

India six months earlier to canvas for the appointment of such a Commission. At a lunch in his honour given by the Finance Minister of Bombay, Sir Chunilal Mehta, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar told me that the British Government were contemplating the appointment of such an all-white Commission and this would bring disastrous consequences to India.

In his letter to George Lansbury of 3rd October, Graham Pole said:

"I saw Sapru the other day and he told me that Mr. Sachhidanand Sinha, who you will remember was Finance Minister of Bihar and Orissa, for some years, and who is over here at present, has had an interview with Ramsay MacDonald. He says that MacDonald expressed his opinion that there is no need to have any Indians on the Statutory Commission because, as he said, 'We know your views, and you can give evidence before the Commission'."

"Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru—who, by the way, asked me to state that his house and his services will be at your disposal if you should visit Allahabad—is very strongly of opinion that if no Indians are appointed or if only tame Indians are appointed, the Commission is likely to be boycotted not merely by the Swarajists, but even by the Moderates. He expresses the fear that an exclusively British Indian Commission will 'so far from allaying popular misgiving add to it and create further complications in India.'"

On 7th October, George Lansbury, the new Chairman of the Labour Party, presided over the Labour Party Conference at Blackpool. Lansbury moved the following resolution on behalf of the Executive Committee, which was adopted unanimously:

"The Conference re-affirms the right of the Indian people to full self-government and self-determination, and, therefore, is of opinion that the policy of the British Government should be one of continuous co-operation with the Indian people, with its object of establishing India, at the earliest possible moment and by her consent, as an equal partner with the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

"The Conference declares that the Royal Commission to be appointed under the Government of India Act should be so constituted, and its methods of doing its work so arranged,

that it will enjoy the confidence and co-operation of the Indian people."

India acted quickly to anticipate the debate in the House of Lords initiated by Lord Birkenhead on the 15th November.

Mrs. Besant wrote to me on 10th November:

"I am writing to Jinnah to say that here in Madras we shall want to join up with a Central Association. Tej Bahadur, I expect, is also writing. Four out of the five political bodies in Madras are joining, and the Justice Party may come in on Sunday. We had a meeting (private) yesterday of the five organisations all determined to stop all quarrels and unite. The representatives of the Justice Party wanted to consult their Party. Can you do anything with Jinnah?"

I wrote to Jinnah immediately if I could see him after my oral evidence before the Indian Cinematograph Committee was over. He immediately replied: "Yes, do come and see me after the evidence, say at about 1 p.m."

Jinnah prepared a short statement and circulated it to friends all over the country. He gave me a copy with instructions to obtain the signatures of 12 prominent leaders from Bombay. I did this within 24 hours and gave him the signed statement on the evening of the 14th. This statement was issued by Jinnah on the 16th boycotting the Simon Commission. I am glad to say, he said, that I have received so far, the most powerful and influential support from all parts of India, the foremost leaders of the Indian National Congress, the All-India Muslim League, the All-India Liberal Federation, the Federation of Indian Chambers and the Mill-owners Association.

Some of the signatories to this Jinnah Manifesto were Sir Dinshaw Petit, Sir Ali Imam, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Sir Abdur Rahim, Sir P. S. Shivaswamy Aiyar, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Phiroz Sethna, Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Munshi Iswar Saran, Yakub Hassan, Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachariar, Dr. Annie Besant, K. C. Neogy, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lalji Naranji, R. K. Shanmugam Chetty, M. A. Jinnah, Sir Manmohandas Ramji, H. P. Mody, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchew, C. Y. Chintamani, Mohamed Yakub, Sachchidanand Sinha and Nawab Ismail Khan.

Lajpat Rai and Jayakar, in a separate statement agreed to the boycott; so did the other Congress leaders.

This formidable all-party boycott did not deter Birkenhead and the British Government from changing their attitude towards the all-white Commission and they secured the support, unfortunately, of the leader of the Labour Opposition, Ramsay MacDonald. It is true Government were able to rally round a few mushroom organisations and individuals to give evidence but nobody knew better than Simon and his Commission and Lord Irwin that the boycott was successful and India gave a fitting reply to the insult by the Imperialistic rigid attitude of the British Government.

On 1st December, 1927, Mrs. Besant wrote to me :

"I leave Madras on the 7th, lecture at Sholapur on 8th, leave after lecture for Poona, arriving early morning 9th. Leave Poona 7-15 a.m. on 10th, reaching 11-30. I do not know time of Jam-boree. I had intended to leave 12th night, but as Jinnah has a Conference on 15th, I will probably stay on.

"Is there any chance of Muslim League coming to Madras? I wish it would and the Liberal Federation too."

"Consult with Jinnah and any other leaders as to a joint public meeting. I do not want to have a separate one at this time."

The Congress session in Madras, and the Muslim League in Calcutta, passed resolution boycotting the Simon Commission. Major Graham Pole attended the Congress Session at Madras as a representative of the British Labour Party; also attended and spoke at the Session of the Muslim League at Calcutta. He said *inter alia* that by coincidence he had attended the Lucknow Congress (1916) and also the Madras Congress (1927) at both of which Hindu-Muslim settlements were arrived at. The Madras settlement was even greater than the Lucknow one. He assured the audience that the Labour Members were sincerely anxious to do their best for India, and if due to the long distance there was not a proper understanding of the Indian situation, let them not misunderstand India's friends in England who were doing their best every day to bring about a better understanding and to work for that Swaraj which, he hoped, many like him would see India in their life time attain triumphantly.

Graham Pole wrote a daily diary of his Indian tour from 16th December, 1927 till 21st January, 1928 when he sailed for England from Bombay. In this diary he says that Lord Irwin

wanted Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru to join his Executive Council. Sapru refused. Graham Pole also says that Lord Irwin wanted to appoint Jayakar as Ag. Member of Executive Council for four months when S. R. Das went on leave.

Among the major towns that he visited were Madras, Calcutta, Allahabad, Delhi and Bombay. He met the Congress leaders including the Congress President, Dr. Ansari, and of course Dr. Besant in Madras; also C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, then Member of the Governor's Executive Council. In Calcutta, he met Sir Ali Imam and Jinnah; in Allahabad he met Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, in Delhi, he met Sir Joseph Bore, Secretary to the Simon Commission, M. R. Jayakar and B. Rama Rau. In Bombay, he met, among others, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, then a Member of the Executive Council of the Government of Bombay. All the time that he was in Bombay, I saw him every day. This diary which he maintained was primarily meant for George Lansbury. Graham Pole asked Lansbury to pass the diary on to Vernon Hartshorn and Major Attlee, the two representatives of the Labour Party on the Simon Commission. On his way to England Graham Pole wrote to Hartshorn on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th January, 1928. In his covering letter, he authorised Hartshorn to show his letters to Attlee, and if he thought fit, to Simon also. Letter to Hartshorn dated 22nd January, 1928 read:

"As you are probably aware, I went out to India to attend the Indian National Congress at Madras, and the Muslim League at Calcutta, and to see and discuss the present situation with Indians of all shades of opinion throughout India. I had hoped to be able to persuade my Indian friends that the arrangements the Labour Sub-Committee had made with Birkenhead, and the concessions he had agreed to, put Indians in an even better position than if they had been originally nominated as members of the Commission. But I have failed.

Baldwin's speech was in very general terms and certainly said that Indians would be approached as "friends and equals". But Indians do not believe that anything real is meant by these words. If they could be made to believe that, I believe the boycott would break down. At present the boycott is *real*—and is being urged by practically every leader of any importance in India including Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Ali Imam, both former Members of the Viceroy's Cabinet; Sir Sivaswamy Iyer, one of the

most "moderate" and cautious of Indians; Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the Muslim leader who has served on previous Royal Commissions in fact every one who carries any weight in the Indian world of politics or with the masses is for the boycott. And why? Because they have good reason to believe that, in spite of all the talk of "equality of status" it is the intention of Government to put before your Commission certain private Government Reports and documents (the purport of which seems fairly common knowledge in India) which are damaging to the *Indian* point of view, but which they believe will *not* be put before the Indian Committee, and which they believe they could knock to smithereens by argument and evidence.

That is the real reason of the boycott, and the tremendous opposition to the Simon Commission from one end of India to the other. They believe that Indians were specially excluded from the Commission so that none of them might know precisely what "damaging" reports were put before you and your colleagues in which they would have no chance to reply and to expose their futility.

Nothing, I believe, will give you co-operation except a clear, unambiguous statement by Simon that the Prime Minister's words were *real* and intended to be carried out; that Indians *will* be approached as friends and as equals and that the Indian Committee will be free to tour where it likes throughout India, and examine the witnesses it chooses, and particularly that it will have access to every document and Report put before the Simon Commission. If that clear statement is made the boycott will break down and they will believe what we say. At present they do not believe in our good faith—and with, I am afraid, good reasons."

Hartshorne replied to Graham Pole on 3rd February:—

"Many thanks for your very informing and helpful letters. I handed them to Attlee, and we agreed it would be advisable to let Sir John Simon see them. I expect before you receive this you will have read the announcement which we have decided to make immediately after arriving at Delhi.

"We have held several meetings on the ship, and I am quite satisfied that if our Indian friends will act sensibly a very good settlement of Indian problem is not only possible but highly probable.



"We shall do everything possible to eradicate from their minds the deep-rooted suspicion and mistrust which, whether justifiable or not, appears to have become a religion with them. No progress, I am convinced, can be made until that distrust is replaced by a genuine, mutual friendship. As far as it is possible to do so, consistent with our responsibilities to the British Parliament, we shall go all-out for the achievement of that result. We intend that every scrap of evidence—oral or documentary—submitted to the Commission by or on behalf of the Government shall be available to the Indian Committees (should such be appointed) equally with ourselves. We shall also afford facilities for members of the Committees to cross-examine witnesses. I think you will have little to complain of when the Commission's intentions are made public. In any case I do not think you will feel that you have been let down.

"We have had a delightful voyage and are all in the best of health. When we reach India we may be treated as "untouchables" but we will not permit ourselves to be included in the *depressed* classes."

After his arrival in England, Graham Pole wrote a long note on "The Simon Commission—Is the Indian Boycott Justified". In this note, he refers *inter alia* to British Labour Party leaders meetings with Lord Birkenhead:

"Mr. Baldwin's first pronouncement, in announcing the appointment of the Royal Commission, was such as to leave no opening whatever for any self-respecting Indian to co-operate. After that and after Lord Birkenhead's (in many ways unfortunate speech in the House of Lords), a sub-Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party consisting of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Philip Snowden, and Mr. George Lansbury, had meeting after meeting with Lord Birkenhead in the course of which—it is common knowledge—the Government agreed to modify, in many important aspects, the announcements made by Mr. Baldwin, Lord Birkenhead and by the Viceroy in India. These changes were, it was understood, embodied in the speeches of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. George Lansbury. Mr. Baldwin, in winding up the debate for the Government, spoke of approaching the Indians "as friends and as equals" but nowhere did he specifically accept the definite propositions laid down by the Labour leaders, although he expressed himself as being in

general agreement with them.

I find, in my conversations with Indians throughout India, that they simply do not believe that Mr. Baldwin meant to accept these propositions, nor do they believe that they are binding on Sir John Simon and the other members of the Royal Commission. They know (and it is common knowledge, I find, throughout India) that ever since the issue of the Reforms Enquiry Committee Reports in 1924 the various Provincial Governments and the Central Government have been preparing a case against further advances to any appreciable extent. And this case is *not* to be put before the Indian Committee, if it should be appointed, as they will be unable to bring evidence and arguments to meet it. That is one of the fundamental reasons why they are opposed to the appointment of a Commission from which Indians are excluded. They resent Lord Birkenhead's reference to the Commission as a "jury" (on which they have no representation) before whom they must as petitioners put their case. They see no "equality of status" in that procedure. They resent the fact that "evidence" will be put before the Simon Commission of which they have no knowledge and to which they are allowed to make no reply. Hartshorne's assurances to Graham Pole in his letter of 3rd February 1928 to treat the Indian Committee on par with the Simon Commission were not fulfilled."

Miss Mayo's book "Mother India" was just then published. Graham Pole's remarks on this book in his "India in Transition" are pertinent:

"There was another and a serious element in Indian mistrust at that time. Miss Katherine Mayo's much talked of book had recently appeared. It appeared at the most critical moment in India's political fortunes, at a time when it could be calculated to do the most harm and create the most prejudice against her. Indians inevitably believed that the book had been published purposely at this juncture, in order to make the worst possible atmosphere.

There were two editions of the book, an American and an English one. Readers of the English edition will remember that it made a very grave attack on the Hindus and the Hindu society. In the American edition there were various attacks made on the Musalmans—but these were omitted from the English edition.

Why were they so omitted? Hindus who had read the American version had only one answer—because it was the British policy to support the Muslim minority against the Hindus. They observed that in India Miss Mayo seemed to have been entertained by high officials, and shepherded about by members of the Criminal Investigation Department.”

The political and social boycott of the Simon Commission was complete and wherever the Commission went, it was received with black flags. To assuage Indian opinion, Sir John Simon made half-hearted and belated concessions. He suggested that the Central and provincial Legislatures would be invited to constitute Committees to assist the Commission in its labours. This proposal was turned down by the Indian Legislative Assembly on the motion of Lala Lajpat Rai.

On October 30th, the Simon Commission arrived at Lahore during its second visit. The Police lathi-charged the boycott demonstrators in front of the Railway Station and Lajpat Rai, the most popular leader of the province received two blows on his chest, resulting in his death on November 17th. This resulted in humiliation and great indignation throughout the country.

The Bombay Corporation on my resolution was adjourned as a mark of protest and grief at this shameful and cowardly attack on a political leader by the Police.

Jawaharlal Nehru on November 29th, was similarly assaulted by the police at Lucknow at the time of the Simon Commission's visit there. He received more blows from the mounted Police and faced them courageously.

India was perfectly justified in boycotting the Simon Commission. As far back as 4th December, 1924, Birkenhead had written to Reading: “To me it is frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government.” A month later he had written: “In ultimate analysis the strength of the British position is that we are in India for the good of India.” He believed also that the Hindus and Muslims were irreconcilable, and he wrote: “All the conferences in the world cannot bridge the unbridgeable”. Birkenhead left it unsaid that the policy of the British Government was to see to it that these two communities would not get together and settle their differences.

In January 1928, after their return from Calcutta from the Muslim League Conference, Ruttie and Jinnah separated. I can-

not find fault with either for this separation, which was due to temperamental differences and difference in age. Their points of view on various aspects of life were different. I can assert from personal knowledge that even today, 35 years after her death, that she retained her affection for Jinnah. Jinnah went to England on April 3, 1928. Ruttie followed a week later on 10th April. There was a rapprochement between them when Ruttie was seriously ill in Paris in August-September, 1928. She went to Paris, got ill, entered a nursing home, so Jinnah followed, stayed with her and as Ruttie told me later, he ate the same food as she did at the nursing home. They returned to India separately, she with her mother, but she was still very ill and I saw her practically every day between the middle of October right till her death on 20th February, 1929, except for the few days during the Christmas week, Mrs. Besant called me to Calcutta to attend the All Parties Conference to discuss the Nehru (Motilal) Report. I did not want to go to Calcutta as I did not like to leave Ruttie alone—she was not keeping good health—but the telegram from Mrs. Besant was a “Command” and I obeyed.

## CHAPTER XXV

### NEHRU REPORT

EARLY in 1928, Birkenhead challenged the Indians to produce their own scheme for a Constitution, instead of always 'indulging in mere destructive criticism' of the Government. Birkenhead's attitude towards India was contemptuous and he and the Baldwin Government did everything possible to insult and provoke India, always harping on and magnifying the communal differences between the two great communities—Hindus and Muslims.

The Congress and the rest of India did not take this insulting challenge lying down.

Already at the Madras Congress in December, 1927, the Congress had directed the Congress Working Committee to draft a 'Swaraj' Constitution in consultation with other parties. Accordingly in February, 1928, an All Parties Conference met in Delhi, with Dr. Ansari, the Congress President, in the Chair and voted for "full responsible Government". This was followed by a meeting in May in Bombay, appointing a sub-Committee to determine the principles of an Indian Constitution. The sub-Committee consisted of Motilal Nehru (Chairman) and included representatives of different political organisations—Sir Ali Imam and Shauib Qureshi (Muslim), Aney and Jayakar (Hindu Maha Sabha), Mangal Singh (The Sikh League), Tej Bahadur Sapru (Liberals), N. M. Joshi (Labour), G. R. Pradhan (Non-Brahmins). Jawaharlal who was the General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee, also acted as the Secretary of the Constitution-making Committee, which came to be known as the Nehru Committee.

It should be noted that Jinnah was not on this Committee as he had already left for England on 3rd April.

The main question before the Committee was the position of the minorities, particularly the Muslims, in a free, self-governing and democratic India. It was realised that the Hindus heavily

outnumbered the Muslims and, therefore, when British Bureaucracy was to give way to Indian Democracy, care was to be taken that the permanent advantage to the Hindus would not work against the interests of the Muslim minority. One of the ways to safeguard the Muslim interests was the continuation of separate Muslim electorates but this could not be accepted as a permanent solution. Other ways and means had to be found to tackle this thorny problem. This was one of the headaches of the Nehru Committee. Dr. Ansari explains the difficulties to Gandhiji in his letter dated 28th June, 1928:

“When I reached Allahabad there was a complete deadlock (in the Nehru Committee). The Sikhs would have no reservation of seats at all anywhere, neither for the majority nor for the minority. The (Hindu) Mahasabha people would allow reservation for the minorities, but none for the majorities. The Congress and Muslim proposal was for a reservation of seats both for the majorities and the minorities. I tried in private discussion with different people to come to a common formula.”

The Nehru Committee submitted its report which was considered at the Conference in Lucknow in August, 1928. The most important among those who signed the report were Motilal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Ali Imam. Among the organisations represented at this Conference, apart from the Congress Working Committee, were All-India Liberal Federation, All-India Muslim League, Hindu Maha Sabha, Central Khilafat Committee, Central Sikh League, the National Home Rule League, All-India Conference of Indian Christians, Jamiat-ul-Ulema, All-India States Peoples Conference, Congress Party in the Assembly, Nationalist Party in the Assembly, British Indian Association of Oudh, Indian Association of Calcutta, Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Sind National League, Deccan Sabha, Swadhin Bharat Sangh and the Provincial Congress Committees of Ajmer, Andhra, Bihar, Bengal, Burma, Central Provinces (Hindustani) and (Marathi), Delhi, Gujrat, Karnatak, Kerala, Punjab, Sind, United Provinces and Utkal — Dr. Ansari presided. The Maharaja of Mehmudabad, the colleague of Jinnah who had not yet returned to India, referred to the 1916 Lucknow Congress-League Pact and trusted that the same spirit would prevail in the deliberations of the Conference. He hoped that all parties would give unqualified support to the Nehru Committee's Re-

port. Dr. Ansari congratulating the Nehru Committee, testified to the noble and single-minded devotion with which the Chairman and Members of the Committee had applied themselves to this epoch-making work. He emphasized the tremendous implications attaching to the report:

"India has gone through many and varied phases of the struggle for liberty, but never in the chequered history of this country's fight for freedom had representatives of all schools of political thought assembled together to draw up a definite scheme of our constitution. That has now been done by the Committee. It is in itself a historic event and when we see the background of the dark events of the last few years, resulting in spasmodic and ineffective attempts to introduce some light into the darkness of wilderness, of confused aims and objects in which we had lost ourselves, I need hardly tell you that this report becomes a doubly historic event." With this high hope and expectations so ably expressed by Dr. Ansari, the Nehru Report so universally acclaimed by all parties was ushered in.

Speeches appreciating the work done by the Nehru Committee were made by Lala Lajpat Rai, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Maulana Shoukat Ali, Dr. Annie Besant, Mohamed Yakub, Sarojini Naidu and J. M. Sen Gupta.

Malviya moved the following resolution seconded by C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar and supported by Tej Bahadur Sapru:

"Without restricting the liberty of those political parties whose goal is complete independence, this Conference declares—

(1) that the form of Government to be established in India should be responsible, that is to say, a Government in which the executive should be responsible to a popularly elected legislature possessing full and plenary powers;

(2) that such form of Government shall in no event be lower than that of any self-governing dominion."

The first jarring note came from Jawaharlal Nehru. He opposed Dominion Status and said that independence should be the goal.

He read the following statement:

"We, the signatories of this statement, are of opinion that the Constitution of India should only be based on full independence. We feel that the resolution that has been placed

before the All Parties Conference definitely commits those who support it to a constitution based on what is termed Dominion Status. We are not prepared to accept this, and, we, therefore, cannot accept or support this resolution. We recognise that the preamble to the resolution gives us the right to carry on our activity in favour of independence, but this preamble does not in any way lessen the commitment contained in the second part of the resolution.

"We have decided, however, not to obstruct or hamper the work of this Conference, but we desire to record our considered opinion on this question and to dissociate ourselves from this particular resolution in so far as it commits us to the acceptance of Dominion Status. We shall not take any part in this resolution by moving amendments or by voting on it. We propose to carry on such activity as we consider proper and necessary in favour of complete independence."

The main features of the Nehru Report in brief were a declaration of rights, a parliamentary system of Government, Dominion Status, a bicameral legislature, adult franchise, allocation of subjects between the Centre and the provinces, redistribution of provincial boundaries on a linguistic basis and an independent judiciary with a Supreme Court at its apex, separation of Sind and an agreement on the Punjab issue. The Nehru Committee had successfully reconciled the conflicting communal claims and tried to find a *via media* between the Congress and the Liberals. Dr. Besant summed up the result of the Conference:

"The day of bondage is ending and the dawn of freedom is on the eastern horizon". Dr. Ansari echoed the same sentiments: "years of utter darkness in which the spectre of communal differences oppressed us like a terrible nightmare. The work of the Nehru Committee had at last heralded the dawn of a brighter day". Motilal Nehru said in December: "It is an achievement of which any country in the world might well be proud."

Before the Conference ended, Mrs. Besant, Malawiya and Lajpat Rai were co-opted members of the Nehru Committee. In December, 1928, Motilal said: "It is difficult to stand against the foreigner without offering him a united front. It is not easy to offer him a united front while the foreigner is in our



midst domineering over us".

The All-India Convention met in Calcutta on the 22nd December, 1928 to finalise the Nehru Report. It was the most representative gathering of political and communal organisations. Attempts were made to re-open the communal issue for which the Nehru Report had found a solution generally agreed upon by all parties at the Lucknow Conference in August. The Aga Khan had definitely taken a reactionary attitude and had opposed the Nehru Report. Jinnah unfortunately was not in India from April to late October and therefore had no hand in shaping the Nehru Report, which was mainly prepared by Motilal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru. Jinnah was present at the Calcutta Convention and he re-opened the communal issue by demanding on behalf of the Muslim League, reservation of one-third of the seats in the Central Legislature and the vesting of residuary powers in the province. It should be remembered that the Muslim League at that time was friendly to the Congress; it was not anti-Congress and it was not reactionary. But this communal issue was not as important as the one raised by Srinivas Aiyangar, demanding independence in place of dominion status. He read a statement signed among others by himself, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Satyamurti. The statement said *inter alia*: "We dissociate ourselves from this constitution in so far as it commits us to acceptance of Dominion Status."

To this Mrs. Besant replied: "Independence and Dominion Status meant practically the same thing. Dominion Status meant that they would have their own Army and Navy and that was essentially necessary to the country desirous of winning freedom from another country not willing to grant it. That was why self-governing dominions could do as they liked. If India desired to be free, she could be free in a few minutes. The change of attitude would be enough to bring Great Britain to her senses. Swaraj will be granted to you when it becomes dangerous to refuse it."

C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar representing the National Liberal Federation made a fighting speech in support of dominion status. He asked if it was not a fact that during the last twelve months the national cause had been enhanced in volume and intensity of expression by the unity which had been secured of

all parties in regard to the Simon Commission. The attitude of men like Sir Ali Imam and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had profoundly modified the political situation in India.

Tej Bahadur Sapru made a forceful speech for unity and said that he was prepared to grant to Jinnah his demand for 1/3rd representation in the Central Legislature.

Jayakar opposed Jinnah's amendment and his opposition influenced the final voting by which Jinnah's amendments were thrown out.

In his final reply, Jinnah made a conciliatory and persuasive and not aggressive speech. He said in moving his amendments: "I am not speaking on this question as a Mussalman but as an Indian. You must remember that the two major communities in India are Hindus and Mussalmans and naturally, therefore, these two communities have got to be reconciled, united and made to feel that their interests are common and they are marching together."

Jinnah wanted the security of the minority to be considered. Jinnah continued: "We are sons of this land, we have to live together. We have to work together and whatever our differences may be let us not arouse bad blood. Nothing will make me more happy than to see Hindus and Muslims united."

Gandhiji had practically taken no direct or active interest in the All India political problems right from 1925. He had taken little active interest in the Gauhati Session of the Congress in 1926, or the Madras Congress Session in 1927. And he attended the All Parties Convention at Calcutta in December, 1928 at the special request of Motilal Nehru. This enabled him to re-enter actively and take the leadership of all India political life, an opportunity which he seized with both hands.

At the Convention he was in favour of the Nehru Report demanding Dominion Status. But after Srinivas Iyengar's insistence on Independence, he without so much as consultations with other leaders conceded that if Dominion Status were not given to India within a year, India should then demand complete independence. What happened at this Convention, I said in a signed letter which appeared in the Indian Social Reformer of 8th January, 1944:

"It was unfortunate that the Nehru Report was called the Nehru Report. It did lead to jealousies and personal bickerings.

I was present in Calcutta in December, 1928 on the platform with Dr. Besant when the Nehru Report was being considered at the All-Parties Conference. Gandhiji, Besant, Sapru, Jinnah, Nehru, C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, Sarojini Naidu, Jayakar—what a powerful combination—were all there on the platform, fighting for the adoption of the Nehru Report, which had asked for full Dominion Status and also made for full communal settlement between the Muslims and the Hindus. Srinivas Iyengar wanted Independence instead of Dominion Status. There was much more a personal element in this than a question of principle. Dominion Status would have won the day, but Gandhiji allowed himself to be influenced by Srinivas Iyengar in spite of the fact that he knew the latter's quarrel was more a result of his personal differences with Motilal Nehru than his zest for winning complete Independence for India. Without consulting Motilal Nehru, Sapru, Jinnah or Besant, Gandhiji made a compromise with Srinivas Iyengar that if Dominion Status were not won or promised during the year 1929, Gandhiji himself would ask for Independence in December, 1929. Gandhiji's compromise upset Sapru, Besant, Jinnah, etc., but they were powerless against Gandhiji's influence. Then Jayakar attacked the communal adjustment suggested in the Nehru Report and this was the second and last nail in the coffin of the Report.

The result of Gandhiji's compromise with Srinivas Iyengar led to the resolution of Independence passed at the 1929 Lahore Congress, with Jawaharlal Nehru as its President. This was followed by the Dandi March in February, 1930. And so the story goes on. Politically we are back in 1860's today and our leaders are still indulging in the luxury of quiet jail life and the rest of them who are out, go on making speeches, making the situation worse every time they open their mouths."

In spite of these two set-backs due to Gandhiji's compromise with Srinivas Iyengar and Jayakar's opposition to communal settlement, the Conference was successful to the extent that all parties were working together for the framing of a generally accepted new Constitution for India. But the good work had to be continued. Mrs. Besant and other leaders, therefore, wanted that the Conference should not be adjourned *sine die*.

The Congress leaders thought otherwise. They decided to go it alone. That very week that the All-Party Convention met

at Calcutta during the Christmas Week of 1928, the Congress Session met under the Presidentship of Pandit Motilal Nehru. Gandhiji moved the principal resolution adopted by the Working Committee with a majority of one to which Jawaharlal, though Secretary of the Congress and the Working Committee, moved an amendment. "You are going too fast", Gandhiji wrote to Jawaharlal early in 1928, "You should have taken time to think and become acclimatised". A few days later, he confessed: "the differences between you and me appear to be so vast and so radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us". As a result of discussion on Gandhiji's resolution and Jawaharlal's amendment, Gandhiji moved an amended resolution:

"This Congress having considered the Constitution recommended by the All Parties Committee Report welcomes it as a great contribution towards the solution of India's political and communal problems and congratulates the Committee on the unanimity of its recommendations and while adhering to the resolution relating to complete Independence passed at the Madras Congress approves of the Constitution drawn by the Committee as a great step in political advance, specially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the Country.

'Subject to the exigencies of political situation, this Congress will adopt the Constitution, if it is accepted in its entirety by the British Parliament on or before the 31st December, 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, the Congress will organise a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation by advising the country to refuse taxation and in such other manner as may be decided upon.

"Consistently with the above, nothing in this resolution shall interfere with carrying on in the name of the Congress of propaganda for complete Independence."

This resolution was the last straw which broke completely the unity achieved at the All-Parties Conference and the Nehru Report received a severe blow. The Congress spurned the co-operation of the other parties including the Muslim League which it had asked for in the Madras Congress of December,

1927. It should be remembered that this All-Parties Conference came into existence through a resolution of the Congress and the Congress now mercilessly killed it. No leaders outside the orthodox Congress opinion could agree to make demands for Swaraj and Dominion Status, accompanied by threats of non-violent non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience unless their demands were granted within a year. It has to be sorrowfully noted that the impetuous Jawaharlal Nehru was responsible for this change of attitude both as regards the All-Parties Conference and the demand for complete independence. Mrs. Besant who attended the Congress as an ex-President, opposed the amended Gandhi-Jawaharlal Resolution. Her speech is worth recording. She objected to the second clause of the resolution. It was stated that if the Nehru Constitution is not adopted, the Congress would organise Non-co-operation, including non-payment of taxes. She also objected to the third clause where Independence was permitted to be preached in the name of the Congress. She complained that she had been in the meeting from nine o'clock and so far only one side of the case had been presented and the other side had not been fairly treated. She reminded them of the part which she and others took in the beginning of the year at the sacrifice of leisure and money in laying the foundation of the Report as well as in popularising the recommendations. But there was no opportunity of making a reasoned speech in favour of that report in this meeting, where a good deal of time had been taken up to the advocacy of the so-called compromise motion introducing the non-co-operation movement as part of the substantive resolution. It gave everything to one side and practically nothing to the other. Dr. Besant's fundamental objection to the resolution was that they could not get Independence without altering the creed of the Congress. The present creed was Swaraj by all peaceful and legitimate means. If they passed this resolution it would necessitate a change of creed and break the Congress into pieces no matter what they might say. She admitted that the Independence party had a perfect right to carry on propaganda. At the same time those who stood for Dominion Status had an equal right to do propaganda for the Nehru Report. But this Resolution permitted the Independence Party to do propaganda in the name of the Congress. Independence could give them nothing

more than what could be obtained under Dominion Status, and while Independence could not be got except by fighting for which the Indians were not prepared, Dominion Status could be had by constitutional means. If they changed the Congress creed into independence those who stood for Swaraj by peaceful means could not be within it. By this resolution, the whole aspect was changed, and they were putting the country on fire.

Referring to acceptance by the Congress of the Nehru Report being conditional on acceptance of it by Great Britain, Mrs. Besant said: "Why on earth should the British Parliament do the work which we have to do? You misunderstand the British Parliament very seriously, if you think they will do when don't do our own and we don't send a bill to Parliament. You say in this resolution that subject to the exigencies of the political situation, you will adopt the Constitution. Who is to be the Judge? Who is going to introduce a bill in Parliament by way of acceptance of the report? Who is going to draft your bill for it? When the British Parliament has adopted your Bill, the whole thing is over and what has Congress to do? There is no need for any further action for it. Proceeding, Mrs. Besant entirely disagreed with the idea of starting non-operation and refusal of payment of taxes. Mrs. Besant continued: she had learnt the lesson in politics that in such a campaign as non-co-operation, it was not the leaders who suffered, but the poor defenceless masses. People would get their lands confiscated and their cattle sold off by the Revenue Officer, and their peasantry would be defenceless. For starting non-co-operation, there must be a common grievance as was the case in South Africa and Bardoli where Mr. Gandhi succeeded, but in a vast country like India, it was different to organise a mass revolt. Gandhi-Jawaharlal resolution was passed. Clearly enough, there was a clash between Motilal and Jawaharlal and Motilal was worried by the opposition from a radical wing of Congressmen led by his son, Jawaharlal. The extremist section led by Jawaharlal, with the support of Gandhiji, had triumphed. Motilal could never have been happy with this resolution of the Congress but he was helpless against his leader, Gandhiji, and his son, Jawaharlal. The saddest part of the story is that though Gandhiji and Jawaharlal almost invariably disagreed with each other on fundamental principles for the next eighteen years (1929-1947), they

always made an unholy compromise and passed unanimous negative resolutions.

The Muslim League Session was held at Calcutta in the same week as the Congress Session and the All-Parties Conference. The Maharaja of Mahmudabad who presided over the Muslim League Session said:

"An annual session of the All-India Muslim League was never held in the last two decades under conditions of greater possibilities than today. Differences of opinion there are and there will be, but no school of thought desires to stand still. The differences relate to the degrees of changes only." He continued: "I will content myself with some of the cardinal principles only. To my mind these stand out under three heads. There is a party that demands "Independence", that is to say, the severance of the British connection. Then there is larger group that pins its faith on Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth. The third question is a question of supreme moment that materially affects the realisation either of the two political concepts mentioned above. I mean the conflict of communal basis and prejudices. No national aspiration is worth the name if it disregards the interest of any community in our vast country. At no time in the history of India was a call for unity more insistent than now." Referring to demand for Independence in the Congress, Mahmudabad said:

"Political theories, however idealistic, yield no beneficial results when divorced from actualities. The application of the doctrine of independence in the sense of severance of British connections is to my mind a hopelessly unworkable proposition. India's place in the British Commonwealth is a place of undeniable security. Her association with the British Commonwealth is a valuable asset and in my judgment it will be a folly to destroy this precious commodity with our own hands. It is my conviction that there is plenty of room for the growth, development and expression of Indian nationalism within the ambit of India's connections with England. There is yet an additional reason for brushing aside the suggestion of 'Independence'. It lies in the fact that Dominion Status as contained and defined in the Nehru Report gives all the rights of citizenship, all the incidence of undiluted democracy, and all the requisites of political freedom that 'Independence' could confer. Regarding

communal differences, Mehmudabad said: "Approach the subject in the spirit of broad-mindedness. As far as I can see the differences between the Muslim minority and the Hindu majority have narrowed themselves down to issues that are few and not essentials of any first principles."



## CHAPTER XXVI

### JINNAH—1929

As Jinnah played a most important part in Indian history along with Gandhiji, Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru right from 1929 till 1947 it is pertinent for historical records to give the personal story of Jinnah from that year. And this personal story has intimate connection with his separation from his wife, Ruttie, in January, 1928 till her passing away in February, 1929.

Throughout January and February, 1929, Ruttie continued to be ill and this depressed her. She hardly ever went out, except for short walks with me. Every evening Jinnah came to see her and Ruttie, Jinnah and I kept on talking as in the old times. Jinnah was not particularly perturbed over the failure of the All-Parties Conference to settle the communal issue. He felt that sooner or later, the Congress and the Muslim League would come to a settlement. Ruttie and Jinnah were getting reconciled to each other. Krishnamurti was to come to Bombay at the end of January and Ruttie asked me if I could bring him to tea on 1st February. Krishnamurti, his Secretary Yadunandan Prasad and I met her at tea at 5 in the afternoon. I left at about 6.30 to keep another engagement, but Krishnamurti invited her to dinner for the 2nd February at the house of his host, my friend, Ratansi D. Morarji. Ruttie accepted for herself and for me and we had a most pleasant meeting with Krishnamurti again. On 13th February, Ruttie, my wife and I went to the cinema for the after dinner show. The Bombay riots were on then and as Hony. Presidency Magistrate I was on the night duty on 16th-17th February at Byculla. In the early morning, I went to meet Mrs. Besant arriving from Madras at the station, then I lunched with her. As I went to my residence, Ruttie came, terribly depressed and unhappy. She spent about four hours with me at my flat, then I took her home and

she made tea for me. I could not leave her in that condition of terrific depression, so I did not go and have tea with Mrs. Besant as she had asked me to do. I left Ruttie at 7 promising to call back by 10-15 p.m. after I had seen Mrs. Besant off at the station. I apologised to Mrs. Besant for having not met her at tea and told her that I had to be with Ruttie as she was feeling so unhappy. She asked me to look after her. When I got to Ruttie's place at 10-15 I discovered to my horror that she was unconscious. I was able to revive and awaken her. Next morning—18th February, she rang me up and asked me to see her on my way to office; she was still most depressed. I tried to comfort her as best as I could and as I was leaving her I said: "I'll see you to-night". She replied: "If I am alive. Look after my cats and don't give them away". These were the last words Ruttie spoke to me. I was dining out at Andheri that night and when I went to Ruttie's house at 11-15 p.m. I found her fast asleep. As I had not slept for continuously two nights I went home.

On the 19th afternoon, I was informed by telephone that she was unconscious again and there was very little hope of her living. Immediately I called at her house but could not see her. On the 20th February evening—her birthday—she passed away. Jinnah was away in Delhi for the Budget Session of the Assembly but returned to Bombay in time for the funeral on the 22nd. Col. and Mrs. Sokhey and I met him at the Grant Road Station. I was sitting besides Jinnah for all the five hours the funeral rites were performed. I knew that Ruttie would have liked to be cremated and I said so to Jinnah, but she was buried under Muslim rites.

Jinnah put up a brave face and after a tense silence, he began to talk hurriedly of his work in the Assembly a week before, and how he helped Vithalbhai Patel, the Speaker, out of the tight corner the latter had got into with Government. Then, as Ruttie's body was being lowered into the grave, Jinnah, as the nearest relative was the first to throw the earth on the grave and he broke down suddenly and sobbed and wept like a child for minutes together. I followed Jinnah and looking for the last time through sorrowful and tearful eyes at the mortal remains of the lovely and beautiful immortal soul, I promised to Ruttie that one day I would write her full story and it took

me more than thirty years to fulfil this promise. I dedicated to Ruttie my 85 page "Gandhiji through my Diary Leaves" (1915-1948), published in May 1950. Jinnah asked me to meet him the next evening as he knew that I was with Ruttie all through the weeks prior to her death.

Never have I found a man so sad and so bitter. He screamed his heart out, speaking to me for over two hours, myself listening to him patiently and sympathetically, occasionally putting a word here and there. Something I saw had snapped in him. The death of his wife was not just a sad event, not just something to be grieved over, but he took it, this act of God, as a failure and a personal defeat in his life. I am afraid he never recovered right till the end of his life from this terrible shock.

Jinnah's personal and political life was as clean as can be and free from corruption. He bought "South Court", the house on Mount Pleasant Road, in 1916. It was a kind of nineteenth century country house and not modern. During the years after their marriage, "South Court" was my second home and I enjoyed the confidence and friendship of both Ruttie and Jinnah. I had great respect for Jinnah as my political leader in Bombay and as a friend. After his marriage with Ruttie in the spring of 1918, he had no separate existence away from his wife. He found in her a great source of inspiration. His personal, political and social life was always with Ruttie. She was always with him and made his life in all its aspects, pleasant, carefree and well worth living. Jinnah, after his marriage, resigned from the Orient Club, where he used to play Chess and Billiards. He never played cards. He abhorred every kind of gambling and all games of chance.

Her death left Jinnah completely lonely. He never recovered from this loneliness and this loneliness added to the bitterness of his life; and I must add that this bitterness, born out of this personal loss and disappointment, travelled into his political life. This, I feel, is the correct analysis of Jinnah's political bitterness which lasted throughout the nineteen years that he lived after his wife's death, and influenced his political life and opinions. This is a sad sad story.

On his wife's death, Jinnah withdrew into his Ivory Tower and he became a perfect isolationist. From a cheerful, pleasant

and social friend with a dry sense of humour, he became ego-centric and was sensitive to criticism. He could not stand abuse, ridicule, misunderstanding and misrepresentation of his actions, and never forgave those, who unwisely and unjustly, indulged in them. His wife's death reacted on him so severely that never once during the remaining nineteen years of his life did he refer to her directly or indirectly or mention her name. I never saw Ruttie's photographs in his house. Ruttie had a beautiful collection of jades, rare artistic articles and first editions of books and they would have made an excellent Museum. But all that Jinnah did was to put them in boxes and forgot all about them.

It is futile to contemplate and speculate how Jinnah's political life would have shaped if Ruttie had been by his side through the fateful thirties and forties. Ruttie was a great nationalist with no communal bias or prejudices. I have not the slightest doubt that if Ruttie had lived Jinnah would have asked her to go back to his house and she would have agreed and there would have been most perfect and full reconciliation between them. Every day Ruttie used to enquire from me how Jinnah was working in the Legislative Assembly, and whether the reports appearing in the Congress press that he was turning communal were true. She, the great nationalist, was disturbed about these reports. I assured her that Jinnah was not turning communal, that he was a staunch nationalist, and that the Congress leaders and the Congress press were mischievously misrepresenting him. Ruttie kept herself away from participating in active politics, but was helpful to Jinnah and Jinnah, influenced by her, kept non-communal.

Was Jinnah arrogant? I answered this question in a letter to the "Times of India" a part of which was published on 22 November, 1953:

"Piqued by Jinnah's opposition to his being appointed the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, Sir Mirza Ismail, I am afraid, is unduly sensitive and creates a mountain of a molehill of a small insignificant incident, between the Nizam and Jinnah. Jinnah had quite a justifiable contempt for such Muslim leaders as called themselves "Nationalist Muslims" and who curried favour with the Congress High Command to win whose favour they abused and vilified Jinnah. The subsequent behaviour of the

Nizam right upto the Police action in September, 1948 as vividly described in Campbell Johnson's book on Mountbatten "The End of a Mission" clearly shows up the Nizam's duplicity and unwisdom. Jinnah was not particularly rude to the Nizam when he sat with outstretched legs and smoked a cigar. Jinnah, it will be remembered, was tall, had long thin legs and he had always to sit with outstretched legs and he was a good smoker.

I would like to give two instances of Jinnah's behaviour which indicate his sense of good manner, courtesy and in the second case his courage and fearlessness.

The first was in my own flat on November 1st, 1929. Dr. Annie Besant was staying as my guest for the day on her way from Madras to Delhi. I had mentioned this to Jinnah and he said he would like to meet her, could he drop in about 10 in the morning on his way from his house to the High Court. Punctually he came at 10 in the morning and I was taking him to Dr. Besant's room; I found him smoking a cigarette. All of us, including Jinnah, knew Dr. Besant's dislike for smoking; so I suddenly shouted: "Jinnah, throw away that cigarette." "I am awefully sorry, Kanji, thank you very much" he said and he threw away the cigarette. Dr. Besant overheard my suggestion and said to Jinnah: "It is all-right; you can keep on smoking". Jinnah said: "No, Dr. Besant, No. Kanji is quite right. I apologise to you."

The other incident took place on 17th August, 1940 in Government House, Bombay. A week after the August 8 proposals, Jinnah was asked to meet the Viceroy. Just before that week, Linlithgow had announced his War Advisory Council, on which he had among others nominated Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, the Chief Minister of the Punjab. The Muslim League had announced its decision to boycott this Council and inspite of it, Sikandar Hyat Khan, a Member of the League, had agreed to serve on the Council. Jinnah had stated in the Press that Lord Linlithgow had thus double-crossed the Muslim League. Jinnah's appointment with the Viceroy was at 11 a.m. but Jinnah did not arrive at the Government House till 11-15 inspite of frantic telephone calls. To keep the Viceroy waiting was *lese majeste*. Jinnah did not apologise for his coming late and as they shook hands and sat down, the Viceroy is reported to have told Jinnah that he has seen in the Press that Jinnah had mis-

understood the Viceroy's action and he wanted to clear up the misunderstanding. Jinnah immediately got up and said he wanted no explanation from the Viceroy and saying this, Jinnah left the Viceregal Chamber, leaving the Viceroy cold and dry. Those who knew of Linlithgow's pomposity, realised how he must have felt then.

It does one's heart good to see that at least one Indian of the stature and incorruptibility of Jinnah had the courage and honesty to tell the British Viceroy what he thought of him when the other Indian leaders including the Congress High Command were lapping it up with phrases like "the best English gentleman", "the best Christian gentleman".

I first met Jinnah in June, 1916 and last I met him was on December 12, 1946. During these 30 years of close and intimate friendship, though I was his junior in age and political hierarchy, I had nothing but extreme kindness and great friendship and consideration from him.

One complaint against Jinnah was that he was too proud and arrogant to go and see Gandhiji at the latter's residence and insisted on Gandhiji going to see him. This was not true in the early years of their political friendship inspite of serious differences of opinion. But Jinnah explained to me why he stopped going to see Gandhiji and instead requested him to come and see him. This is, he explained, what happened. Hardly was he with Gandhiji than one after one his secretaries and associates came in and interrupted the conversation on all kinds of flimsy excuses—articles had to be revised, papers were to be corrected immediately. a young daughter-in-law had come to see him complaining against ill-treatment by her mother-in-law, etc., etc. and no proper discussion could take place. Jinnah complained to Gandhiji that if the latter's colleagues did not like Jinnah coming down for frank talks, he would not any more come to Gandhiji's house, and Gandhiji accepting Jinnah's just grievance readily agreed.

In personal life, Jinnah was correct and spick and span. He was rightly described as the best dressed politician and gentleman in India. Nobody knew how much Jinnah owed in this matter to his wife, Ruttie. Captain Victor Thompson, War Correspondent of the "Daily Herald", had this to say about Jinnah in August, 1942:

"Mr. Jinnah is as spick and span as his home. His smart grey suit fits his sparse figure perfectly. His ties and socks are gay but impeccable. With his monocle, aquiline face, piercing eyes and smooth grey hair, he looks like a handsome younger brother of George Arliss. He speaks with clarity gained from years at the Bar."

## CHAPTER XXVII

"1929"

AFTER the three hectic weeks in Calcutta in December, 1928 where the All-Parties Conference to consider the Nehru Report, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim<sup>4</sup> League met, January and February, 1929, passed off quietly. There were some four outstanding events during the next four months—(1) Motilal Nehru's censure motion against the Government, (2) the arrest and trial of the Communist leaders for their conspiracy in Meerut, (3) the Public Safety Ordinance issued by the Viceroy and (4) the coming into power and office in U.K. of the Labour Government, after which Lord Irwin went for four months to England for consultation with the Labour Government.

Then came the Viceroy's announcement on his return to India promising Dominion Status and the Round Table Conference in London. This was followed by the Leaders' acceptance of the Viceroy's offer. But the Congress extremist section led by young Jawaharlal and Subhas Bose, were not in a mood to accept their leaders' advice. They wanted Independence. Followed then the abortive Conference between the Viceroy and Gandhiji, Motilal, Sapru, Jinnah and Patel. The last important event of this fateful year—1929—was the Lahore Congress presided over by Jawaharlal, which rejected the Round Table Conference invitation and declared Independence as India's goal.

On 11th March, Motilal Nehru moved a censure motion against Government. He recapitulated the history of the demand from February, 1924 for the grant of responsible Government and the summoning of a representative round table conference. Though the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, the response from the British Government was unsatisfactory. Then came the Muddiman Committee. Repression in Bengal followed. In December, 1924, the country unanim-



ously supported the national demand and condemned repression. In May, 1925, C. R. Das made a generous offer which was not accepted by Lord Birkenhead. Lord Birkenhead refused to grant the weighty recommendations of the non-officials on the Muddiman Committee, three of whom were Tej Bahadur Sapru, Motilal and Jinnah. In August, 1925, the Assembly reaffirmed the national demand and indicated the lines on which a scheme of responsible government was required. Motilal himself had told the Government that they were willing to co-operate on their own terms and ready to discuss those terms with the representatives of the British Government, but that they would not submit to any constitution imposed from outside. That offer was rejected and the Congressmen decided to go into the country at the elections in support of the national demand and walked out of the Assembly after making a statement.

Between January and March, 1927, all parties in the Assembly accepted the national demand and between May and December, 1927, steps were taken for communal and political unity and an agreed national constitution.

But Government appointed the all-white Simon Commission against the wishes of the people of India. The boycott of the Commission was carried to the Assembly which repeated the national demand. There was then an All-Parties Convention which decided on framing a Constitution and to continue the boycott of the Commission. All indications were that the Simon Report would satisfy none except the European group and the Treasury benches.

The Nehru Committee had ceaselessly worked and framed a Constitution based on the constitutions of the Dominions and claimed the same form of full responsible government which the Dominions enjoyed. This was the latest form of the national demand. So far as the basic principle was concerned the whole country and all shades of opinion, political, religious, Commercial and industrial, were fully agreed.

There was of course an important wing of the Congress which aimed at complete independence, but there was no section of people who would have anything less than full Dominion Status. As for the independence wing, it had also agreed to adopt the constitution proposed by the Committee if forthwith conceded by the Government. The country was at one in de-

manding full responsible government of the Dominion type.

No doubt, Motilal pointed out, there were certain points arising out of the general scheme of communal settlement proposed by the Committee which were a subject of controversy between certain sections of Hindus, Musalmans and Sikhs. Such differences in the nature of things must arise. The root cause of these differences lies in the common distrust of the Government. All that was needed was that Government should concede the main demand for Dominion Status based on adult suffrage. Motilal said: "I am certain that no sooner does full Dominion Status become an accomplished fact, than all differences will automatically adjust themselves. If this is not coming, in the terms of the Calcutta Congress resolution, nothing contained in the Nehru Report will bind anybody and the Congressmen will be free to follow their own programme and invite the country to join them. The door of negotiation and compromise is still open and will always remain open. No constitution, however carefully drawn up, can subsist for all time to come. Whatever defects there are in the Nehru Committee scheme will be easily removed by mutual settlement sooner or later. So far as I am personally concerned, I would willingly concede the demand made by either party if only the other party would agree."

Motilal told Government not to seek shelter under the few points of difference that remain to be adjusted. He added: "We are always willing to confer with the representatives of the British Government on equal terms, provided India has the predominant voice and any agreement reached in such a conference is duly given effect to by necessary legislation." Pandit Nehru referred critically to the Public Safety Bill and the Trade Disputes Bill.

Motilal concluded: "No lover of the country can contemplate light-heartedly the implications of the non-co-operation movement. If we are driven to resort to non-co-operation, we shall be ready to take the consequences. As for the duty of the Government to govern, I fully agree. But there is the duty of the governed, that is, to secure just government for themselves on principles fully recognised all over the world and to spare no sacrifice, no suffering, however great, to achieve that end."

Jinnah supported Motilal's censure motion but pointed out

that he was not in accord with the Congress policy and programme of non-co-operation. He said: "I stand here firmly and deliberately assert that the policy of my school of thought is in favour of the establishment of responsible government, nothing less, nothing more."

Jinnah reiterated the Muslim League demand for conceding 1/3 representation in the Central Legislature.

The Censure Motion was carried by a majority.

In September, 1928 was introduced in the Assembly the Public Safety Bill and after four days' debate it was thrown out by the Casting Vote of the President (Vithalbhai Patel). In January, 1929, it was brought forward again in a revised form and after a series of protracted debates, was ruled out of order by the President on the 11th of April.

In between on March 20th the British Government in India started one of the large scale campaigns of repression. Large number of people were arrested and their houses searched. The campaign was intended against Communists. Among those arrested was S. A. Dange, then 29, the present Chairman of the Communist Party of India. The case was tried in Meerut and this case is therefore known as Meerut Conspiracy Case.

Two days after the President had ruled out of order the Public Safety Bill, the principles of the Bill were enforced by an ordinance promulgated by the Governor-General—Lord Irwin. The Ordinance *inter alia* aimed at deporting without trial any foreigner in the country whom the Government considered objectionable.

Justifying the Ordinance, the Viceroy said: "The ruling of the President debars my Government from asking the Legislature to give them the additional powers of which they conceived themselves to stand in need. We cannot ignore the fact that the men behind the revolutionary movements against which the Bill is directed will not stay their hands because the enactment by the Indian Legislature of the preventive legislation is postponed."

In June, 1929, Lord Irwin went to England at the invitation of the new Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, for consultations. He told the British Government of the serious situation in India resulting from the bitterness caused by the all-White Simon Commission which was completely boycotted by all the

important political parties, and impressed upon them the need for an enlightened policy. Sir John Simon asked the Prime Minister for the extension of the terms of reference so that the methods for the adjustment of future relationship between British India and the States might be fully examined by the Commission. Simon further suggested that after the Report was published a conference should be arranged between the representatives of His Majesty's Government and the representatives of British India and the States for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals to be submitted by the Cabinet to the Parliament.

But it is clear that the British Government though apparently accepting the suggestion of Simon, did not postpone action till after the Report was published.

For on his return to India in October, 1929, Lord Irwin made a historic announcement on 31st October. The most important part of the announcement was the following declaration:

"I am authorized on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that, in their judgment, it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's Constitutional progress, as then contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status."

Lord Irwin promised a round table conference of representatives of British India and Indian States with the British Government and the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

Lord Irwin said: "In the full realisation of this policy, it is evidently important that the Indian States should be afforded an opportunity of finding their place and even if we cannot at present exactly foresee on what lines this development may be shaped, it is from every point of view desirable that whatever can be done should be done to ensure that action taken now is not inconsistent with the attainment of the ultimate purpose which those whether in British India or the States, who look forward to some unity of All India, have in view."

The Viceroy concluded:

"It is not necessary for me to say how greatly I trust, that the action of His Majesty's Government may evoke response from and enlist the concurrence of all sections of opinion in India, and I believe that all who wish India well,

wherever and whoever they are, desire to break through the webs of mistrust that have lately clogged the relations between India and Great Britain. I am firmly assured that the course of action now proposed is at once the outcome of a real desire to bring to the body politic of India the touch that carries with it healing and health and is the method by which we may best hope to handle these high matters in the way of constructive statesmanship."

Lord Irwin's announcement on behalf of the British Labour Government satisfied in many ways Motilal Nehru's demand for Dominion Status and Round Table Conference. This announcement further anticipated the Lahore Congress to be held under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru at the end of the year when the ultimatum regarding the acceptance of Dominion Status was to expire on 31st December.

The reception to Irwin Announcement was friendly and enthusiastic. The All-India leaders lost no time in meeting immediately in New Delhi to consider the proposals laid down by the British Labour Government. And on 4th November, four days after the announcement, the All-India leaders signed a joint manifesto, welcoming and accepting the proposals but made certain suggestions in regard to further clarifications. The leaders' manifesto read *inter alia*:

"We the undersigned have read with careful consideration the Viceregal pronouncement on the question of India's future status among the nations of the world. We appreciate the sincerity underlying the declaration, as also the desire of the British Government to placate the Indian opinion. We hope to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion Constitution suitable for India's needs but we deem it necessary that certain acts should be done and certain points should be cleared so as to inspire trust and ensure the co-operation of the principal political organisations in the country.

"We consider it vital for the success of the proposed Conference that:—(A) A policy of general conciliation should be definitely adopted to induce a calmer atmosphere, (B) that political prisoners should be granted a general amnesty, (C) that the representation of progressive political organisations should be effectively secured and that the Indian National Congress,

as the largest among them, should have predominant representation.

“Some doubt has been expressed about the interpretation of the paragraph in the statement made by the Viceroy on behalf of His Majesty’s Government regarding Dominion Status. We understand, however, that the Conference is to meet not to discuss when Dominion Status is to be established but to frame a scheme of Dominion Constitution for India. We hope that we are not mistaken in thus interpreting the import and implications of the weighty pronouncement of H. E. the Viceroy.”

The manifesto demanded the immediate inclusion of a more liberal spirit in the Government of the country. The manifesto further wanted that the Round Table Conference should be convened as expeditiously as possible.

Among the signatories to this weighty all-party manifesto were Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mrs. Besant, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Dr. Ansari, V. J. Patel and Khaliquzzaman. Gandhiji and Motilal, from the Congress, enthusiastically welcomed the Viceroy’s announcement. Gandhiji had a hand in drafting along with Sapru, the manifesto and further he used his powers of persuasion on Jawaharlal to accept and sign this manifesto. But Jawaharlal felt uncomfortable and wrote to Gandhiji withdrawing his signature.

Subhas Bose and his leftist friends issued a separate statement, rejecting the proposals made by the Viceroy. Unfortunately, the British Press and the Conservative and Liberal Parties led by Lord Reading strongly criticised the Labour Government’s declaration. They played into the hands of the Indian Extremists who were therefore to a certain extent able to dominate the next meeting of the Working Committee at Allahabad on 14th November. Even then Gandhiji and Motilal remained firm; so also Vithalbhai Patel, then President of the Assembly, who was on friendly terms with the Viceroy at that time.

But the Working Committee under the influence of Jawaharlal and Subhas Bose and further piqued by the opposition in England, demanded that the suggestions made in the Delhi manifesto were *sine qua non* for any co-operation. But Jinnah felt satisfied at the declaration of Dominion Status as goal and with the procedure of the Round Table Conference for thrash-

ing out the details. Moreover, he also agreed with a section of the moderates who regarded as unwise the apparent implications in the Delhi manifesto that the Congress would not co-operate if the conditions stated were not satisfied. Motilal was anxious that the Round Table Conference idea should not be smashed to pieces as a result of the conditions which the Congress insisted upon. He, therefore, suggested to Sapru that he (Sapru) should make efforts to arrange a meeting between the Viceroy and Gandhiji. Sapru immediately started correspondence with the Viceroy, through the good offices of the Governor of U.P. and requested the Viceroy that a meeting should be arranged as early as possible between him and Gandhiji. Vithalbhai Patel supported Sapru's efforts.

The Viceroy lost no time in agreeing to this meeting and suggested that instead of seeing Gandhiji alone, he would like to meet Motilal, Sapru, Jinnah and Vithalbhai Patel, along with Gandhiji. The three or four points of adjustment were the release of prisoners, the composition of the Round Table Conference by election or nomination with due and important weight to be given to the numerously big and most representative political organisation—the Indian National Congress. A few days later, the Labour Secretary of State, Wedgwood Benn, in reply to questions, as good as conceded to the demands made by the Congress on these points. The date of the Conference was fixed for 13th December, and Gandhiji arrived in Bombay from Ahmedabad in good time to proceed to New Delhi for this 13th December Conference.

But owing to the previous engagement of Motilal Nehru in an important law suit in Lucknow on the 12th, he suggested the 14th. The 14th did not suit the Viceroy as he was going to Mysore for a shooting expedition! The date for the Conference was, therefore, fixed for the 23rd. This proved fatal to the success of the Conference. I shall explain.

Gandhiji proceeded to Wardha to spend these ten days before going to New Delhi. There he received Jawaharlal Nehru's Lahore Congress draft Presidential Address for "correction". Jawaharlal was definite in his opinion in this draft that the Congress should reject the invitation for the Round Table Conference. I have no doubt that this opinion influenced Gandhiji at the Irwin Conference on the 23rd.

A bomb was thrown at the Viceroy's train on the 22nd as he was returning from Mysore, fortunately without hurting anybody.

The Conference was to meet on the 23rd at 4 p.m. and Gandhiji had started his weekly silence vow that morning to be broken at the Conference time at 4 p.m. Because of his silence, it was not possible for Sapru, Jinnah and Vithalbhai Patel to know of any change in Gandhiji's mind about the acceptance of invitation to the Round Table Conference.

After preliminary and formal talk, the Viceroy came down to brass tacks and asked the delegation of the five leaders which point they would like to discuss first, the release of the prisoners, the method of invitation, etc. It had been made clear that the Congress would get the highest number of delegates. They were to be selected by the Congress and their names were to be sent to the Viceroy who would in due course nominate them as delegates and thus meeting fully the Congress demand. So also, the demand for the release of political prisoners was to be conceded.

But Gandhiji said that before any details were discussed, he would like to give a general picture of the Indian political situation and started the story of India from the battle of Plassey in 1757 and the misrule of British Government which had led to complete loss of confidence in their bona fides. He, therefore, on his part could not agree to discuss the details in regard to the Round Table Conference unless Lord Irwin at that Conference definitely promised Dominion Status. Gandhiji spoke for over an hour.

This speech of Gandhiji came as a bomb-shell not only to the Viceroy but also to Sapru, Jinnah and Vithalbhai. Gandhiji had taken Motilal into his confidence.

Gandhiji would not discuss the details; he wanted a promise from Lord Irwin, representing the British Government, of immediate Dominion Status.

Lord Irwin pointed out that it was with a view to decide all these major problems of Dominion Status and self-government that the Conference was being convened and he was not in a position then and there to give any promise on behalf of the British Government. The Conference broke up without settling anything.

Three or four days later, Tej Bahadur Sapru came to Mad-



ras for the Annual Session of the Liberal Conference. I was in Madras then to attend the Theosophical Convention at Adyar. Mrs. Besant asked me to go with her to a private conference in C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar's house where Sapru confidentially gave the whole story of the convening and breaking up of the Conference, and read the correspondence between him and the Viceroy.

There is no doubt that Gandhiji was influenced by the stand taken in Jawaharlal's draft presidential address. I would like to speculate on one or two might-have-beens. Was the shooting expedition in Mysore so very important and urgent that the Viceroy of India should give up such important state business to keep this prior shooting engagement? And if the Conference had been convened prior to Gandhiji's reading Jawaharlal's draft address, would not Gandhiji, and, therefore, the Congress, have accepted the invitation to the Round Table Conference? Could not have Motilal Nehru given up his prior legal engagement in Lucknow to attend the 13th December Conference? How these small events can affect the fate of nations? I will ask one more question. If the Congress leaders had agreed to go to the Round Table Conference in London in 1930 as a result of the successful termination of the Irwin-Leaders Conference, would it not have been possible for the Congress and the Muslim League to come to an agreement with the Labour Government in England and we would have had a new Government of India Act in 1932, satisfactory to all the parties concerned, the British Government, the Congress and the Muslim League, and all other shades of Indian opinion and the new reforms would have started working by 1933 or 1934, as it was definitely expected they would. A serious blunder was made, a great opportunity was lost.

To those of us who opposed Jawaharlal's and Gandhiji's demand of independence and complete breach with the British Government, it must be a poor consolation that after 20 years of struggle which was avoidable, Jawaharlal became the biggest protagonist of maintaining the British connections. The Congress leaders have been in the habit of discovering their mistake 15 to 20 years too late and even today they are following the same policy.

The year 1929 ended with the Indian National Congress

Session held at Lahore under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji was to have been the President but he wanted Jawaharlal to take the presidentship from his father, Motilal. This gratified Motilal in spite of the fact that Motilal disagreed with the leftist views of his son. But personal affection for his son and the feeling that the son was to succeed the Congress Gadi from his father, got the better of Motilal's judgment.

The Congress passed a resolution for Independence moved by Gandhiji and the resolution also decided not to participate in the Round Table Conference. It further called upon the Congressmen to resign their seats in the Central and Provincial Legislatures and not to stand for future elections. The following is the text of the Resolution:

"The Congress endorses the action of the Working Committee in connection with the manifesto signed by party leaders, including Congressmen, on the Viceregal pronouncement of the 31st October relating to Dominion Status and appreciates the efforts of the Viceroy towards the settlement of the national movement for Swaraj. The Congress, however, having considered all that has since happened, and the result of the meeting between Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leaders and the Viceroy, is of opinion that nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference. This Congress, therefore, in pursuance of the resolution passed at its session at Calcutta last year declares that the word 'Swaraj' in Article I of the Congress Constitution shall mean Complete Independence and further declares the entire scheme of the Nehru Committee's Report to have lapsed and hopes that all Congressmen will henceforth devote their exclusive attention to the attainment of Complete Independence for India. As a preliminary step towards organising a campaign for Independence and in order to make the Congress policy as consistent as possible with the change of creed, this Congress resolves upon complete boycott of the Central and Provincial Legislatures and Committees constituted by the Government and calls upon the Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating, directly or indirectly, in future elections, and di-

rects the present Congress members of the Legislatures and Committees to resign their seats. This Congress appeals to the nation zealously to prosecute the constructive programme of the Congress and authorises the All-India Congress Committee, wherever it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of Civil Disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary."

With this, not only the Nehru Report was buried but the Swaraj Party was killed. Gandhiji's handiwork was seen in the drafting of this Resolution. He played his cards cleverly. He regained the ground which he had lost to the Swarajists in the middle of twenties and finally returned to the Congress not only as a leader but as the Dictator. This position he maintained with small variations here and there, almost till the end of his life.

The operative part of the Congress Resolution was the non-participation in the Round Table Conference and the launching at some future unspecified date of the Civil Disobedience Movement and the boycott of the Legislatures.

Gandhiji himself belonged to the right wing of the Congress but in order to win over Jawaharlal to his side and in order to keep him under him, he agreed to Independence as against Dominion Status. The right wing of the Congress consisting of stalwart leaders like Motilal Nehru, Dr. Ansari and Mrs. Naidu was at that moment dead, because these leaders accepted for the sake of unity the Lahore Congress Resolution, however, much they disagreed with it in private. These leaders fell in line with the Gandhian movement of non-co-operation and civil disobedience.

That Sastri had the political sixth sense to foresee what Gandhiji and Motilal would do at the Lahore Congress could be seen from his letter to Sir Sivaswamy Aiyar on 2nd Dec., 1929. He said *inter alia*:

"Some surprises have come on me in politics. This Conference-to-be (Round Table) may prove one. I hope so devoutly. But it has many obstacles to success. The next Congress Session may raise one. I don't like the tone of Jawaharlal Nehru's Nagpur address. It contains a hint of coming truculence. Gandhi may prove powerless to resist the young bloods.

I meant to help him (Gandhi) in that great task by joining the Delhi Manifesto. I thought he was genuinely struggling on our side. Now, however, a doubt has begun to cross my mind. Is he not after all thirsting for a great opportunity for his mighty weapon? He told me in so many words, G. A. Natesan listening, that he would not be sorry if this Conference fell through. He seemed to fear it would side-track his movement and delay it. But as the Viceroy's effort was sincere, it appealed to his sense of honour and chivalry, and he had to meet it in like spirit. But as to result, he thought it an inconvenience, if not an impediment. If this be the correct reading of his mind, I fear he may yield to the intransigents.

Motilal Nehru, strong now in combination with Gandhi against his son, will in the end (so I think) be overcome by his paternal affection."

Some reference should be made to Jawaharlal's Presidential Address. He said: "If the Calcutta Resolution holds, we have but one goal today, that of Independence. This Congress has not acknowledged, and will not acknowledge, the right of the British Parliament to dictate to us in any way. We have not the material or the training for organised violence, and individual or sporadic violence is a confession of despair. The great majority of us, I take it, judge the issue not on moral but on practical grounds, and if we reject the way of violence it is because it promises no substantial results. Violence is bad, but slavery is far worse."

Jawaharlal urged that India should repudiate all non-beneficial debt, including that incurred for the purposes of the Great War. He advocated the boycott of Legislative Councils and local bodies, the boycott of all British goods, and the non-payment of taxes.

An attempt was made by Pandit Malaviya and N. C. Kelkar, in the Subjects Committee of the Congress, to restrain the Congress from taking any final decision on the question of independence and non-co-operation with the Round Table Conference until the holding of an All-Parties' Conference. But they were not successful. Equally unsuccessful was the attempt of Subhas Bose to get the Congress to declare for complete severance of the British connection, and the establishment of a parallel Government and to commit the Congress to the opening

of the Civil Disobedience campaign on January 1st, 1930.

Gandhiji was shocked when he found that his resolution condemning an attempt which had been made on the life of the Viceroy on December 23rd, 1929, was passed by a narrow majority. The militant section amongst the Congressmen who did not hide their belief in the inevitability of violence, had grown in influence during recent years. Even many of those in the Congress who still subscribed to the Chief Article of Gandhiji's belief, non-violence, had begun to waver in that faith.

Gandhiji felt that he had to do something very desperate and act quickly to prevent the revolutionaries from gaining more hold on the Congress for their advocacy of violence. He wanted to stop this rot and he thought the remedy was non-violent non-co-operation!

Gandhiji had to move slowly. Beyond passing the resolution to launch a non-co-operation campaign, no definite programme of non-co-operation was so much as discussed, leave aside the question of being formulated; and the promise to the minorities of communal settlement was equally vague and meant nothing.

The question is as between Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru, who captured whom. Gandhiji accepted the goal of complete Independence, implying the break with the British. But he was successful in keeping Jawaharlal by his side and preventing him from going whole-hog with the other extremists like Subhas and Srinivas Iyengar. Gandhiji maintained this position of leadership with Jawaharlal.

Gandhiji disagreed violently from Jawaharlal ever since the latter's return from Europe at the end of 1927. Gandhiji was displeased with some of Jawaharlal's activities. Writing to him early in 1928, Gandhiji said: "You are going too fast. You should have taken time to think and become acclimatised". Further he wrote: "The differences between you and me appear to be so vast and so radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us."

But in the end Gandhiji named Jawaharlal as his political heir. It was because of Gandhiji and Mountbatten that Jawaharlal became the first Prime Minister of India and not Vallabhbhai Patel. If the decision had been left to the Congress lead-

**ers and the Congress Party, the choice would have fallen on Vallabhbhai Patel.**

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### DANDI MARCH, GANDHI'S AND SLOCOMBE INTERVIEW

GANDHIJI had no definite plans about the launching of the non-co-operation movement. He and the Working Committee, therefore, fixed Sunday, the 26th January, 1930 for the celebration all over India by holding of mass meetings, of the adoption by the Congress of Complete Independence as its immediate objective.

The pledge *inter alia* read:

"We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people as of any other people to have freedom. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connections and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence. We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country. We recognise that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes."

But it seemed Gandhiji was not anxious to begin his campaign of non-co-operation. On 30th January, 1930, he wrote in "Young India" making an offer to the Viceroy: "If the British Government would accept eleven points, he would not press on with civil disobedience." Some of these eleven points were reduction in land revenue, abolition of salt tax, scaling down of military and civil expenditure, release of political prisoners and

levy of duties on foreign cloth. Of course, the Government could not, even if they wanted, have conceded these demands. It looked however fantastic that Gandhiji should offer to the Viceroy terms of reconciliation within a month of passing of the Independence and non-co-operation resolution.

The reactions in England on the Congress resolution rejecting the Round Table Conference and on repudiation of debts were terrible. The reactionaries in England who had never reconciled themselves to Irwin's Declaration of October, 1929, took full advantage further to misrepresent the Indian point of view. An indiscreet speech by the Under Secretary of State, Lord Russell, created more distrust and confusion in India. Lord Russell said in Cambridge that Dominion Status was not possible at the moment and would not be for a long time.

Churchill made a most unhelpful reference to Dominion Status: "No responsible person supposes for a moment that the forthcoming Round Table Conference can produce Dominion Status for India or that Dominion Status is likely to be obtained for India within the life-time of anyone now living."

At a moment when the efforts of the Labour Government and Lord Irwin were being directed towards securing co-operation in India, nothing could have been more inopportune than these utterances.

The fight was on. No reconciliation seemed possible. Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy of his intention to start Civil Disobedience. He decided to march on foot from Ahmedabad to Dandi on the sea-coast for the purpose of breaking the salt-tax law. This march began on 12th March. It received a great impetus by the arrest of Vallabhbhai in Ahmedabad on 7th March ordered by a petty local official without prior consultation, or orders from the Provincial Government of Bombay. Early in April, Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested in Allahabad. Over 60,000 Indians, men and women, were arrested for the breach of the salt-law during the next 4 or 5 months. Vithalbhai Patel who had resigned from the Presidentship of the Legislative Assembly, was among the arrested. This was the first time in Indian history that women of all classes and creeds participated actively and in great numbers in Gandhiji's non-co-operation movement. They picketed liquor and foreign cloth shops.



At last Government lost patience and arrested Gandhiji on 5th May, and lodged him in Yeraoda Jail without trial. The then Home Member, Sir Ernest Hotson, later Acting Governor of Bombay, told me that he did not want to arrest Gandhiji. I came into close contact with Hotson because of our work in the Children's Aid Society of which he was the Chairman. He complained to me that some prominent Indian friends were bringing pressure on him to arrest Gandhiji and Hotson could not any longer defy the orders from the Government of India, though he did this successfully in regard to Jawaharlal. The Government of India asked Bombay Government to keep an eye on Jawaharlal and arrest him. But Hotson refused. Within ten days of Gandhiji's arrest, George Slocombe, the Correspondent of the "London Daily Herald", an organ of the British Labour Party, arrived in Bombay, with the specific intention to interview Gandhiji in jail. It is mysterious that he was permitted to do so. After his first interview with Gandhiji in Yeraoda, he contacted me with a letter of introduction from Graham Pole and from 18th May till 5th July when he sailed for England, we met daily for hours together to talk things over. He then had a second interview with Gandhiji which was friendly and conciliatory in tone. George Slocombe was present at the two salt raids by Gandhiji's followers at Wadala, a few miles off Bombay—on 18th and 25th May. I was with him at the time of his second visit there. Slocombe made these comments on his second visit :

"After witnessing today's dramatic raid at Wadala, 5 miles outside Bombay, I am more than ever convinced that only two courses are open to the British Authorities in India. Either they must frankly declare Martial Law all over the country and rely openly upon rifles and machine-guns to maintain respect of law, or they must make a supreme attempt to conciliate the various and complex social forces which Mr. Gandhi's example has set in motion in the only way possible—by a bold declaration in the British Parliament, the summoning of a Round Table Conference to frame a Dominion Status Constitution for India, and the offer of inviting Mr. Gandhi in exchange for the calling off of the Civil Disobedience Movement."

A week after Gandhiji's arrest, and a week before Slocombe's interview with Gandhiji, was published the correspondence between Ramsay MacDonald and Lord Irwin with a statement from the latter, reiterating the British Government's intention to go ahead with the proposal to hold the Round Table Conference. The date fixed for this Conference was 28th October. Irwin pointed out that the Civil Disobedience Movement had not in any way adversely affected the British Government's attitude of pursuing the policy of Constitutional reforms through a Round Table Conference in London. Repression was in full swing at this time. It is unfortunate that Ramsay MacDonald could not and did not fix an earlier date for the Indian Round Table Conference. He gave two reasons. First, the Imperial Conference was to meet in London towards the end of September and would go on for a month. Secondly, the Government had to wait for the publication of the Simon Commission Report.

This delay in holding the Conference a year after the Viceroyal announcement, created an air of uncertainty and suspense and the non-co-operation movement went ahead with its destructive agitation, resulting in ruthless repression. This delay, embittered and poisoned the situation in India.

But yet another attempt was made at conciliation by George Slocombe. George Slocombe was much more than an ordinary newspaper correspondent. He desired a settlement and worked whole-heartedly for it. For this purpose, he met Motilal Nehru in the middle of June, 1930 and suggested that Motilal should issue a conciliatory statement through him which he would send to the "Daily Herald" and also the Viceroy would be informed about it immediately. Motilal agreed and in the interview he said:

"If it were made clear that the Round Table Conference would seek to frame a Constitution for a free India (subject to such adjustments of our mutual relations as are required by the special needs and conditions in India, and by our past association) I would be disposed to recommend the National Congress to accept an invitation to participate in a Conference. We must be masters in our own household, but we are ready to agree to reasonable terms for a period in which to transfer power from the British admini-

nistration in India to a responsible Indian Government. We must meet the British people in order to discuss these terms as nation to nation on an equal footing."

A series of meetings between Motilal Nehru, George Slocombe and some non-Congress leaders followed. These included Motilal Nehru, Sir Prabhashankar Pattani, Sir Chunilal V. Mehta, Vithalbhai Patel, Sir Phiroze Sethna, Jayakar and Natarajan. Slocombe drafted the statement to be issued by Motilal and Motilal put his signature to it. The leaders decided to contact Lord Irwin at once and inform him of the desire of Motilal to come to terms with Irwin and the British Government. Jayakar left for Simla to meet the Viceroy. It should be noted that in those times it took about 40 hours to reach Simla. But before leaving, Jayakar wrote to the Viceroy enclosing Motilal's statement which was to be published. The most curious thing happened. I was told then that the British Secret Service tapped this letter before it was delivered to Irwin. Irwin complained about this to Jayakar. But the Secret Service went further and Motilal was arrested on his way to Allahabad before Jayakar could reach Simla and meet Irwin. Nothing could, therefore, be done immediately. It was possible that if Motilal was not arrested, he and Irwin would have met each other and held discussions. Slocombe realised that after Motilal's arrest, there was nothing more he could do in India and he left for England on 5th July. His great effort at reconciliation had failed. But he continued his good work in England by briefing the Labour Party leaders on the situation in India. The beurocracy in India—the Steel Frame—did not want any settlement with India. Irwin was helpless against manoeuvring of the beurocracy and against the reactionary Conservative and Liberal Parties in England. His good intentions came to nothing. But he persisted.

In June, 1930, the Simon Commission report was published in two stages, the second volume giving the recommendations. It did not create any stir or interest and hardly was it published, it was shelved. 1930 was different from 1927 or 1928 and not much was heard of the Simon Report even at the Round Table Conference. It was out of date by the time the Round Table Conference met late in October, 1930. What happened during the two months July-August after the Viceroy's first meeting

with Jayakar on his peace mission is succinctly described in the statement issued on 5th September by Sir Tej Bahadur and Jayakar along with their correspondence with the Congress leaders in jail. The statement *inter alia* said:

"On the 20th June, 1930, Pandit Motilal Nehru gave an interview to Mr. George Slocombe, Special Correspondent of 'The Daily Herald' (London) with regard to his views about attending the Round Table Conference.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. Slocombe had a conversation with Pandit Motilal Nehru in Bombay as the result of which certain terms were drafted by Mr. Slocombe and submitted to Pandit Motilal Nehru and approved by him. One copy of those terms was sent to Mr. Jayakar by Mr. Slocombe as agreed upon by Pandit Motilal Nehru as the basis of his (Mr. Jayakar) or any third party's approach to the Viceroy.

Mr. Slocombe likewise addressed a letter to Dr. Sapru at Simla forwarding a copy of these terms. Mr. Slocombe said that Pandit Motilal Nehru had agreed to their acting as intermediaries for the purpose of approaching the Viceroy on the basis of these terms.

In his statement, Motilal Nehru suggested that the British Government and the Government of India should give a private assurance that they would support the demand for full responsible Government of India, subject to such mutual adjustments and terms of transfer as are required by the special needs and conditions of India and by the long association with Great Britain and as may be decided by the Round Table Conference. Motilal Nehru undertook to take personally such an assurance—or the indication received from a responsible third party that such an assurance would be forthcoming—to Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru and added that if such an assurance were offered and accepted, it would render possible a general measure of conciliation which should entail the simultaneous calling off of the civil disobedience movement, the cessation of Government's present repressive policy and a generous measure of amnesty for political prisoners and would be followed by Congress participation in the Round Table Conference on terms to be mutually agreed upon."

Therefore, Sapru and Jayakar interviewed the Viceroy early in July, and they wrote to the Viceroy on 13th July suggesting that they may be permitted to have private interviews in the jail with Motilal, Jawaharlal and Gandhiji. The Viceroy readily agreed. Sapru and Jayakar then interviewed Gandhiji in Yeraoda Jail on the 23rd and 24th July. That they were not able to make any impression on Gandhiji is clear from the letter which the latter gave to them. He demanded that the eleven points referred to in his "Young India" article of January 30, should be conceded, that the salt tax should be removed and prohibition should be enforced. Even then Gandhiji would make no definite commitments as to his attitude towards the Round Table Conference. And this is clear from his most unhelpful covering letter to Motilal which the peace negotiators took to Motilal and Jawaharlal in Naini Jail. This letter deserves to be quoted in full if for nothing else to show his negative approach to the problem of settlement:

"My position is essentially awkward. Being temperamentally so built, I cannot give a decisive opinion on matters happening outside the prison walls. What I have therefore given to our friends is the roughest draft of what is likely to satisfy me personally. You may not know I was disinclined to give anything to Mr. Slocombe and wanted him to discuss things with you but could not resist his appeal and let him publish the interview before seeing you. At the same time, I do not want to stand in the way of any honourable settlement if the time for it is ripe. I have grave doubts about it but after all Pandit Jawaharlal's must be the final voice. You and I can only give our advice to him. What I have said in my memorandum given to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Jayakar is the utmost limit to which I can go, but Jawaharlal, for that matter also you, may consider my position to be inconsistent with the intrinsic Congress policy or the present temper of the people. I should have no hesitation in supporting any stronger position up to the letter of the Lahore resolution. You need, therefore, attach no weight to my memorandum unless it finds an echo in the hearts of you both. I know that neither you nor Jawahar were enamoured of the eleven points brought out in my first letter to the Viceroy. I do not know

whether you still have the same opinion. My own mind is quite clear about them. They are to me the substance of Independence. I should have nothing to do with anything that would not give the nation power to give immediate effect to them. In restricting myself to the three only in the memorandum, I have not waived the other eight, but three are now brought out to deal with the Civil Disobedience. I would be no party to any truce which would undo the position at which we have arrived today."

The peace negotiators—Sapru and Jayakar—then met Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru at Naini (Allahabad) Jail on 27th and 28th July. Both the Congress leaders agreed completely with the point of view taken by Gandhiji. They gave Sapru and Jayakar a note to be taken to Gandhiji in Yeraoda Jail. With this was given Jawaharlal's letter to Gandhiji. To explain his attitude towards and complete rejection of the peace offer, I may quote one or two sentences from this letter: "For myself I delight in warfare. It makes me feel that I am alive. Events of the last four months in India have gladdened my heart and have made me prouder of Indian men, women and even children than I had ever been, but I realise that most people are not warlike and like peace and so I try hard to suppress myself and take a peaceful view."

Thus it will be seen that the Congress leaders—Gandhiji and Jawaharlal—threw all moderation and restraint to the winds. They were gloating over what they thought was their "great success"—because of the people's response to the Civil Disobedience Movement of the last five months. This success was negative. They should have realised that they could have improved the chances of real settlement when they were in a position to bargain from strength.

Sapru and Jayakar continued their great mission. Jayakar saw Gandhiji in Yeraoda Jail on 31st July and 1st and 2nd August. Gandhiji gave a note to Jayakar saying that no constitutional scheme would be acceptable to him which did not contain a clause allowing India the right to secede from the Empire at her desire and reiterating his demand for eleven points.

This was followed by another conference with Sapru and Jayakar on one side and the Congress leaders on the other in Yeraoda Jail when Motilal and Jawaharlal were transferred from

Naini Jail. The Congress leaders were Gandhiji, Motilal, Jawaharlal, Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Syed Mahmud and Jairamdas Daulatram. Fruitless discussions continued ending in a long letter signed by the Congress leaders refusing to accept any modifications in their points of view, particularly about complete independence, picketing of liquor shops and the disobedience of the salt law. Sapru and Jayakar then went to Simla and had several interviews between 25th and 27th August first with the Viceroy and then with some Members of the Executive Council. The Viceroy gave a letter to them for showing it to the Congress leaders in Allahabad and Yeraoda. The Viceroy admitted that the peace mission had failed as of course it had. Once again the peace missionaries saw the Nehrus at Naini who gave them a note to Gandhiji. This note said: "Thus Irwin has declined to agree to all the major propositions and many of the minor ones laid down in our joint letter. The difference in his outlook and ours is very great, indeed fundamental."

Sapru and Jayakar saw Gandhiji and other leaders in Yeraoda Jail with the note from the Nehrus. The leaders issued a statement from Yeraoda Jail on the 5th September. The Congress leaders finally turned down all attempts at peace. They ended the note:

"There need, however, be no disappointment for the apparent failure of the Peace negotiations. The Congress is engaged in a grim struggle for Freedom. The nation has resorted to a weapon which the Rulers being unused to it will take time to understand and appreciate. Non-violence being assured to the end, we are certain of the early fulfilment of the national aspiration. This we say in spite of the bitter and often insulting language used by the powers-that-be in regard to Civil Disobedience."

I must pay a handsome tribute to Sapru and Jayakar for the patience, perseverance and sound judgment in continuing their peace negotiations in spite of the heavy odds against them from the very beginning. They undertook this onerous task at the special request of Motilal Nehru made through his interview in June with Slocombe and his second statement given to him. It is not a little surprising that Motilal Nehru did not in any way co-operate with Sapru and Jayakar in their efforts initiated by him. One wonders if the Sapru-Jayakar negotiations would

have taken a more positive turn, if Motilal Nehru had not been arrested at the end of June and would, therefore, have proper opportunities freely to discuss the peace problems with Sapru and Jayakar. His arrest was a great political blunder. Further, it has to be recorded with regret that Motilal was a victim of his surroundings and the political atmosphere round about him. He had no chance of taking the initiative in his own hands when he had to work in co-operation with Gandhiji and Jawaharlal. Besides, Motilal was a sick and tired man in July-August, 1930 and he was 69. He passed away early in February, 1931.

One may venture to ask a question. What would have happened if the Congress leaders had shown a less recalcitrant and truculent attitude? And if they had taken a helpful and reasonable attitude towards the peace negotiations which would have resulted in a compromise settlement between the Viceroy and the Congress. The Civil Disobedience Movement would have been called off and the leaders and 60000 other prisoners would have been released and a correct and friendly atmosphere would have been created for the London Round Table Conference. The Congress would have attended this Conference and participated whole-heartedly in its work. I shall make bold to answer my question.

The First Round Table Conference would have been a greater success and India would have had responsible self-Government with Dominion Status through a new Government of India Act passed by the British Parliament by 1932.

A great opportunity was missed by the Congress leaders; and India had to wait for the realisation of her goal till 1947 when Attlee, then British Labour Prime Minister acceded to India's demand. But with this difference. The Sub-Continent had to be divided into India and Pakistan and this was no fault of Attlee or the British. India thus wasted 17 years in negative struggles when Swaraj was already at her door as early as 1932.

In his statement of 31st October, 1929, announcing the convening of the Round Table Conference in London, the Viceroy declared:

"I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that, in their judgment, it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as then contemplated, is the attain-



ment of Dominion Status."

It will be remembered that Ramsay MacDonald in 1928 had, as leader of the Opposition, said in the House of Commons that he hoped that very soon another country would attain Dominion Status. As he said this, he flourished the Commonwealth of India Bill in his hand and added: "I refer to India."

There is not the slightest doubt that both Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and the Viceroy were serious and sincere in their intentions about India attaining Dominion Status.

The All-Party leaders in their joint manifesto of 4th November said with reference to India's "future status among the Nations of the World": "We appreciate the sincerity underlying the declaration as also the desire of the British Government to placate the Indian opinion. We hope to be able to tender our co-operation to His Majesty's Government in their effort to evolve a scheme of Dominion Constitution suitable for India's needs."

In his biography of Lord Halifax published in 1941, the author, Alan Campbell Johnson, publishes for the first time a note on Dominion Status written by Lord Irwin himself in November, 1929 soon after his historical announcement. Lord Irwin summarises his considered views on Dominion Status at the time. He says *inter alia*:

"In considering the public discussions to which the phrase "Dominion Status" is now being subjected it is important to appreciate what seems to be a fundamental distinction between the general political thought of Great Britain and of India, for I believe the failure to do so is responsible for not a little misunderstanding.

To the English conception, Dominion Status now connotes, as indeed the word itself implies, an *achieved* constitutional position of complete freedom and immunity from interference by His Majesty's Government in London.

The Indian seems generally to mean something different. I should say that very few of the responsible sort who speak about immediate Dominion Status for India ignore the fact that complete Dominion Status in the sense outlined above is not possible for at least some time to come. But they seem to me to be thinking on different lines from those followed by British thought. Whatever he may feel it necessary to say in

public, the Indian is not so much concerned with the *achieved constitutional state* in the British sense, as he is with what he would consider *the indefeasible assurance of such achievement*. In all the constitutional discussion of the last two years, the underlying element in much of Indian political thought seems to have been the desire that, by free conference between Great Britain and India, a constitution should be fashioned which may contain within itself the seed of full Dominion Status, growing naturally to its full development in accordance with the particular circumstances of India, without the necessity—the implications of which the Indian mind resents—of further periodic enquiries by way of commission. What is to the Englishman an accomplished process, is to the Indian rather *a declaration of right*, from which future and complete enjoyment of Dominion privilege will spring. The Leaders' statement issued in Delhi on my announcement of October 31st talks of the Conference framing a Dominion Constitution suited to India's needs. The idea seems to be the same. Gandhiji, writing in 'Young India' of November 14th, 1929, says:

"I can wait for the Dominion Status Constitution, if I can get the real Dominion Status in action. If, that is to say, there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and self-respecting nation, and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service."

No doubt there is the further difficulty of reconciling the constitutional responsibility of Parliament with the self-determination claims of the most extreme nationalist Indian thought. Gandhi said to me not long ago: "If Great Britain could once give us liberty to order our own future, she would be surprised at our diffidence in undertaking responsibilities, and in the degree to which we should ask for her help."

Lord Irwin concludes: "But here it is evident that the only course possible is to afford every opportunity to Indian opinion to express itself by the way of Conference as proposed, with the assurance that any such expression must carry great weight with Parliament and that the greater the unanimity of Indian opinion, the greater will be the weight attaching to its expression."

## **CHAPTER XXIX**

### **THE FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE**

#### **GANDHI-IRWIN PACT: GANDHI LEAVES FOR LONDON**

ON 11th September, 1930, a week after the failure of the peace mission of Sapru and Jayakar, the personnel of the First Round Table Conference was announced. Soon all eyes turned to London where the First Round Table Conference was inaugurated by a friendly speech by His Majesty King George V on November 12th. All shades of opinion and interests in British India except the Congress were represented at the Conference. In addition to the fifty-eight members who comprised the British Indian delegation, the Indian States were represented by a strong delegation consisting of many of the chief Ruling Princes.

Along with the open proceedings of the Conference, informal discussions took place between British Indian delegates and those representing the Indian States. The outcome of these discussions was of tremendous importance.

It had been assumed both by the Statutory Commission and by the Government of India in their Dispatch that the creation of a Federation of All India was a more or less distant ideal. But there was an agreement among Indian members led by Sapru that British India and the Indian States should form a Federal Union ruled by Parliamentary system of Government. The Indian States electrified the political atmosphere by enthusiastically agreeing to consider an immediate Federation on the conditions that British India must be federalised and the Central Government must cease to be a purely official Government and become in some degree responsible to the Central Legislature. The three leaders who were responsible for this flying start were Sapru, Maharaja Gangasingh of Bikaner and the Nawab of Bhopal. It was my great privilege to have

come into intimate contact with Maharaja Gangasingh in the late thirties and the early forties. He was a staunch nationalist at heart and one of the most painstaking and hard-working Princes, with the good of his people in his heart. He was proud of his direct connections with the British Sovereign. I should call him a Conservative Liberal, knowledgeable and shrewd, and an excellent conversationalist. I spent a most profitable and instructive week with him as his guest in Bikaner in middle August, 1942, immediately after the "Quit India" movement started.

The Nawab of Bhopal, an intimate friend of Jinnah, and who was then known in Government circles as the Congress Prince had as his Secretary much to the discomfort and displeasure of the Government of India Shoaib Quraishi who suffered rigorous imprisonment in jail in 1923 as a staunch and loyal follower of Gandhiji. The Nawab of Bhopal said at the Conference: "We can only federate with a self-governing and federal British India". This was agreed to and a number of sub-Committees were appointed to work the details, the most important of which was the Federal Structure Committee, with the Lord Chancellor, Lord Sankey, as the Chairman. Equally important was the problem of communal settlement. The principal parties on this vexed question were the Hindus and the Muslims but it was made a little more difficult by Dr. Ambedkar who demanded separate electorates for the Depressed Classes of whom he was the leader.

What happened in London I can best describe by quoting extensively from Sir Chimanlal Setalvad ("Recollections and Reflections", published in 1946):

"The Indian Liberal Party was strongly represented at this Conference. There were in all 13 Liberals. After we reached London well in advance of the date fixed for the Round Table Conference, it was arranged that some representatives of Hindus and of Muslims should meet to consider the question of a communal settlement. Sapru, Sastri, myself, Jayakar, Moonje and Ambedkar were deputed for this meeting and the Aga Khan, Jinnah and one other gentleman represented the Muslims. The meetings were held at the residence of H. H. the Nawab of Bhopal and we met night after night continuously for several days. H. H. the Nawab of Bhopal was very helpful and was

anxious that a settlement should be arrived at. When we first met, I put the question to the Aga Khan, whether if we arrived at a satisfactory settlement on other points, he would agree to joint electorates. He said: "if you satisfy our demands on all other matters we would agree to joint electorates with reservation of seats for Muslims." I put a further question "If we came to a settlement on all matters including joint electorates, will the Muslim delegates support the national demand at the Conference?" His answer was characteristic. He said "In that event you lead and we follow".

Then we asked him what were their demands for settlement. He then stated that the principal demands were that they wanted Sind and the N. W. Frontier Province to be made separate provinces, that in the provincial legislature, the Muslims should have a reasonable weightage and that in the Central Legislature, the Muslims should have one-third of the total number of seats. At that time the idea of Federation with the States sending their representatives to the Central Legislature was not contemplated. Sapru, Sastri and myself would have agreed immediately to these demands and secured joint electorates. We were, however, seriously disappointed in the attitude of Jayakar and Moonje. We first took up the question of Sind being made a separate province. Jayakar and Moonje brought forward various conditions which in their view should be fulfilled before Sind could be made a separate province. We occupied several evenings on this one question alone.

The discussion on other points dragged on for many nights. In the meantime, reactionary elements among the Muslim delegates in London as well as reactionary Muslims in India, getting scent of what was happening at our meetings, got busy and pressure was brought to bear upon the Muslim representatives at our small Conference. Ultimately, one night the Aga Khan said that the matter was now out of his hands and he felt that he could not bind the Muslim representatives by any agreement that he would like to enter into. A great opportunity was thus lost. If Sapru, Sastri and myself could have helped it, we would have at once conceded the demands of the Aga Khan and made him and other Muslim representatives sign for joint electorates. If this had happened, the subsequent political history of India would have taken a different turn."

The reactionary Muslims in India were not the only party frightened by a probable agreement on the Hindu-Muslim question. The bureaucracy in India was equally frightened and so was the reactionary British Conservative Party.

Jinnah who throughout the Conference took a bold nationalist stand against the reactionaries of both sides, further offended the Conservatives by strongly attacking commercial safeguards in India for the British, sponsored by Conservatives.

Pressure was brought on Jinnah by the Conservative Party through Aga Khan but Jinnah did not budge and stood strongly for the Indian cause. Ramsay MacDonald sent for Jinnah and told him that in the new order of things that would come in India, the British Prime Minister would have to look for prominent Indians to take up the Governorships of Provinces, obviously implying that Jinnah would have an excellent chance if he proved to be a good boy. Jinnah asked MacDonald if this was an attempt to bribe him to get his support on the British Government's compromise suggestion, particularly Commercial safeguards.

The Aga Khan also tried to bring pressure on Jinnah, but Jinnah remained firm. At a midnight meeting, Aga Khan put it to Jinnah that if he (Jinnah) would persist in his opposition to the commercial safeguards and would continue to try to come to settlement, with Sapru, Sastri and Setalvad on the Hindu-Muslim question, the Muslims of India would lose the support of the British Conservative Party for the special privileges for Muslims in India.

In India, Sir Fazl-i-Husain, Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, pulled strings and foiled the attempts of the Labour Government who were anxious and willing to accept the 'entente' in regard to joint electorates between the Hindu and the Muslim leaders—Sapru, Sastri, Setalvad, Jinnah, Aga Khan and Nawab of Bhopal. In his diary of December 3, 1930, Sir Fazl-i-Hussain records:

"News from Round Table Conference indicates that the Labour Government made attempts to make Moslems agree to some sort of joint electorates. Shafi, Bhopal, Sultan Ahmed, Fazl-ul-Huq, Hidayatullah were ready for the game, but others were against it. Mohamed Ali was also helping, and no doubt Jinnah, too, though himself remain-

ing in the background. I had to take strong action and the situation has just been saved. We must keep our present weightage in six Provinces and Centre and have majority in Bengal and the Punjab through separate electorates. Let Hindus non-co-operate, and let us build up sufficient strength during the next ten years."

One incident, though unimportant, may be mentioned. Sapru and Jinnah were a few minutes late for a meeting with Ramsay MacDonald. They apologised saying that their delay was caused by their being at a meeting where Wedgwood Benn made an interesting speech for 20 minutes. MacDonald commented that Wedgwood Benn was not clever enough to hide his thoughts in a 20 minute speech.

Committees of the Conference were set up to deal with the questions of the Constitution of the Provincial Governments, the separation of Burma from British India, Minorities, Franchise, the Services, the Northwest Frontier and the separation of Sind.

In the second week of January, 1931, the Reports of these Committees were submitted to the whole Conference sitting in Committee. A procedure was adopted whereby the Reports of the Committees were "noted" with the observations made by members of the Conference.

The chief results of the Conference were summed up by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru at the Final Plenary Session of the Conference on January 19th. He pointed out that three central ideals had emerged. "One, the higher, nobler, loftier idea of an All-India Federation, which has taken such a material shape mainly because of the patriotic attitude adopted by the Indian Princes. The second important idea is the ideal of responsibility at the centre. The third important idea, which is an integral idea of all systems of responsible government, is that India must be prepared in the years to come to defend herself".

The Indian States in all questions of paramountcy, were still to retain their contact with the Crown through the Viceroy. They were, however, anxious to join the common organisation for all subjects which were scheduled as federal.

The federal authority was to be self-governing, subject to certain agreed safeguards for a transitional period.

At the close of the Conference the Prime Minister pointed out to the Indian delegates that if they were drafting their

own constitution, without any outside assistance or consultation, it would be impossible for them to draft such a constitution without embodying safeguards in it. But he went on to say that in such statutory safeguards as might be made for meeting the needs of the transitional period, it would be the primary concern of His Majesty's Government to see that the Reserved powers were so framed and exercised as not to prejudice the advance of India through a new constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

The Conservative Party view was that if the safeguards could be made effective with care and goodwill, and if the practical problem could be met in a workmanlike spirit, then it would accord support to a new constitution.

Lord Reading, speaking for the Liberal Party, was much more definite "We have expressed in plain language our definite support of the policy of conferring responsibility at the centre", he said, "provided the safeguards are adequate and the new constitution is workable."

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru put the position with regard to safeguards in the following words: "It may be that there are certain safeguards. Frankly, I am not alarmed by these safeguards, and indeed, when you come to examine them, these safeguards are really intended in the interests of the responsible government that we are establishing at the centre, and not to strengthen the hands of English control over us."

Sapru made an appeal to the Government to release the civil disobedience prisoners.

The Round Table Conference was adjourned *sine die* on 19th January and the Indian delegates including Sapru, Sastri and Jayakar left for India on the 23rd. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar was the first to arrive in India as he returned by air. There was no night flying then and the planes were not fast-moving. It took Sir C. P. four days of day-flying from London to Bombay via Karachi. He told me that the Round Table Conference was a great success and the future was full of promise. This was the opinion of other Indian delegates also even though the communal question was not solved.

This feeling of optimism was prevalent throughout India. One of the senior British I.C.S. in Bombay who had been superseded twice or thrice by his juniors, was at last appointed



Member of Bombay Governor's Executive Council. When I asked him if he would hold this job for the full period of five years, he told me that he did not expect to be in India for more than four to six months as the new Constitution would come into force within that time, bringing full autonomy to Provinces and he would have to quit. The Indian leaders in London were so jubilant about the trend of events and so sure about the change of order soon that they made a serious blunder. They asked the British Prime Minister to appoint Lord Willingdon as Irwin's successor. They pointed out that under the new regime, the Viceroy and the Governor-General would only be the constitutional head of the Government and he would not interfere in the day-to-day government of the country. Lord Willingdon whose term of office as Governor-General of Canada was not to expire for some time was summoned to London and was sent to India as Viceroy and Governor-General. Though benevolent, kind-hearted, well-meaning and friendly, Lord Willingdon proved to be a weak Governor-General and succumbed to the designs of the British Beurocracy which surrounded him in Delhi, Simla and Calcutta.

On their return to India, on 6th February, 1931, 26 delegates to the R. T. C. issued a manifesto stating that British opinion had undergone a remarkable change in India's favour and that it had been explicitly recognised that the task of governing India should be entrusted to an Indian Executive responsible to the Indian Legislature.

The front-rate Congress leaders, the original members of the Working Committee, as on January 1, 1930, were unconditionally released on 25th January, as a gesture of good will towards the Congress and the country. Irwin made a conciliatory statement in announcing this decision :

"My Government will impose no conditions on these releases, because we feel that the best hope of the restoration of peaceful conditions lies in discussions being conducted by those concerned under terms of unconditional liberty. I am content to trust those who will be affected by our decision to act in the same spirit as inspires it."

The reaction of Gandhiji who immediately proceeded to Allahabad, was not unfriendly. He said: "I have come out of gaol with an absolutely open mind, unfettered by enmity

and unbiassed in argument. I am prepared to study the whole situation from every point of view and to discuss the Prime Minister's statement with the other Round Table delegates."

It seems to me that in thus having "an open mind," Gandhiji was influenced by the positive gains which India had made at the Round Table Conference.

The Working Committee assembled in Allahabad where Motilal Nehru was lying on his death-bed. He passed away on 6th February, 1931. The Working Committee suspended its judgment in regard to the Civil Disobedience movement and awaited the return of Sapru and Sastri for a talk with Gandhiji about the achievements of the First Round Table Conference. As a result of Gandhiji's talk with Sapru and Sastri, he (Gandhiji) wrote to the Viceroy asking for an interview. Gandhiji had eight meetings lasting 24 hours with the Viceroy starting on 17th February. Finally, on March 4th an agreement was reached which has been called Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The Gandhi-Irwin Pact provided for the discontinuance of the civil disobedience by the Congress and the revocation of ordinances and the release of civil disobedience prisoners by Government. There was a concession in a small way to poor people living on the sea-coast to manufacture salt, and the recognition of picketing of foreign cloth. The Congress agreed to go to the Second Round Table Conference on the basis that Federation was an essential part as also were Indian responsibility and reservations and safeguards in the interests of India for such matters as defence, external affairs, the position of minorities, the financial credit of India, and the discharge of existing obligations of the public debt. It should be emphasized that Gandhiji agreed to these reservations and safeguards. This was a terrible shock to Jawaharlal as it was clearly at variance with 'complete independence' to which the Congress was pledged. He moaned:

"I knew most of the clauses, for they had been often discussed, but, at the very top, clause 2, with its reference to safeguards etc. gave me a tremendous shock. I was wholly unprepared for it. The question of our objective, of independence, also remained. I saw in that clause 2 of the settlement that even this seemed to be jeopardised. Was it for this that our people had behaved so gallantly for a year? Were all our brave words and deeds to end in

this? In my heart there was a great emptiness as of something precious gone, almost beyond recall."

Vallabhbhai too did not approve of the Pact.

The agreement did not even guarantee dominion status. It may be stated that its terms fell manifestly short of those which the Congress leaders had considered as the minimum for a truce in August 1930 during the negotiations with the peace-makers—Sapru and Jayakar. Further, there was no reference to the "eleven points" which Gandhiji had enunciated only a year before as a test of the sincerity of the British Government. In December, 1929, Gandhiji could have made a much better deal with Irwin without putting the country into the negative and disastrous Civil Disobedience movement, putting 60,000 Indians in jail and creating a great political and economic distress and without upsetting the normal flow of political events. Congress then could have attended from strength the First Round Table Conference.

Gandhiji changed his technique in his dealings with and in making a pact with Irwin. Only after making this pact, he asked for its endorsement by the Congress Working Committee, suggesting that if it did not endorse it, he would consider it as a vote of no-confidence in him.

This pact which was a 'treaty of peace' signed by Irwin and Gandhiji, put the Congress on a high pedestal and increased its prestige and status. The British conceded to the Congress a status and authority to speak for political India. This was a great gain for India. The reactionaries in the United Kingdom including Churchill realised that they had yielded ground and according to them this was a set-back for the British prestige.

But, Lord Irwin's coming to terms with Gandhiji received appreciation from over 100 members belonging to all parties in the House of Commons. On 6th March, Graham Pole who was a Member of Parliament then wrote to Lord Irwin:

"I enclose some pages of signatures of Members of the House of Commons of all Parties sending you our grateful thanks and heartfelt congratulations on your magnificent and successful efforts to bring peace, prosperity, concord and happiness to the peoples of India and Britain.

"Perhaps I ought just to add that this expression of our ap-

preciation was only thought of after the Secretary of State for India had made his statement in the House yesterday afternoon, and all the signatures were obtained in about a couple of hours. Had there been more time at our disposal, and had we been able to organise it properly, we could have filled many more sheets. We felt, however, that it was better to get this indication of our appreciation of your magnificent success sent out quickly, than to wait for the many other signatures we could undoubtedly have obtained."

Irwin replied to Graham Pole on the 19th March:

"Thank you very much indeed for your letter of 6th March and for the messages signed by so many members of the House of Commons expressing their pleasure at the result of my recent conversations with Mr. Gandhi. It is very kind of them to have thought of showing their appreciation in this way, and I shall always preserve the list of signatures as a treasured memento.

It is too early of course to say that we are out of the wood yet, and none of us need underestimate the difficulties ahead, but I think there can be no doubt that the atmosphere is sweeter now than it has been for some time, and we can but hope for the best."

On March 13, 1931, Irwin writing to King George V, gave his impressions about his interview with Gandhiji:

"I believe it, Sir, to be definitely untrue to suggest that he is out to break the unity of Your Majesty's Empire."

So far as Gandhiji was concerned, I do not think he signed this Pact with any mental reservations. He took the Delhi Pact as the beginning of a new chapter in the Congress-Government relations. On 6th March, he wrote to the Viceroy:

"I must ask for one favour. I told you that it would be a point of honour with the Working Committee to see that there was a cent per cent fulfilment of the conditions obligatory on the Congress. You will help me to implement this obligation if you will draw my prompt attention by wire, where necessary, to any irregularity on our part, that may come under your notice.

"I pray to God that the friendship at which the settlement is an attempt will become a permanent fact."

The Viceroy's letter to Sastri on 4th March shows the helpful part played by the latter in influencing Gandhiji. Irwin

wrote to Sastri:

"I must write one line of thanks to you for the part you have played in making this agreement with Mr. Gandhi possible. I can guess how great your part has been and believe me I am very grateful."

Irwin was accused of appeasement, but this is a wrong view. On the contrary, it was an act of great, wise and constructive statesmanship on his part to have come to terms with Gandhiji. He always wanted to come to terms with the Congress—honourable to both sides; and it was recalcitrance of Gandhiji and his first-rank followers which prevented an honourable settlement.

A few months after his return from India, Irwin had a talk with William Temple, Archbishop of York, on events in India. This was followed by a letter from Temple dated 4th December, 1932 in which *inter alia* the Archbishop said:

"I do not know if you care to follow up at all our conversation of yesterday about suffering.

"I believe it is historically correct to say that those industrial strikes which have been successful in achieving a real advance have not done it by extorting some concessions through the pressure of grave inconvenience of economic loss, but through the effect of suffering on the part of the strikers and their families in calling public attention *first* to the sincerity of their belief that they are suffering an injustice. They suffer for a cause, not irrelevantly, but in service of it in the only way open to them; and this calls attention to the merits of the cause itself.

"I can well believe that you might have ended Civil Disobedience by starting on a fast which you were ready to maintain till death. And I can conceive its being a justifiable as well as a heroic thing to do, but if so, it is because it was right that Civil Disobedience should be ended and if so the Indians ought to have stopped it for that reason, their attention being called to it by your action, if they stopped it only to save you from suffering and death, that would be good so far as it goes, for it would be an expression of love, but it would not settle whether Civil Disobedience is inherently right or wise, and therefore would not be more than a temporary cessation.

"If my end is good, I may serve it by any means that in

fact will serve it, provided there contain no moral evil. The deliberate use of suffering as a means of gaining power to do good is no doubt justifiable; but it easily turns into a way of imposing my will on other people, and thus into a very subtle and poisonous form of self-assertion.

"To do him justice, I think Gandhiji regarded his fast as penance for the sin of untouchability—from complicity in which he felt called to clear himself by this expression of his horror at it. If that was his motive, it was fully justified, and the political consequence has nothing to do with the ethical quality of his act. But the desire for suffering in the young woman who shot at Jackson had no connection with penance. It was (if the account given is right) a means to increase her power over minds of other people; then everything depends on the use to which the power was to be put. But the very fact that it was possible to seek the suffering which would lead to power by such means shows that at bottom it was a self-centred desire for power and therefore sinful. For to be self-centred is the essence of sin."

Temple was later appointed as Archbishop of Canterbury and he had socialist leanings.

It is unfortunate that Irwin did not give details of the conversation he had to which Dr. Temple gave this reply. But one can guess what Irwin must have told Temple! What did Irwin think of Gandhiji? Some light is thrown on this by Negley Farson, the American Correspondent, who was in India during the critical months of Civil Disobedience of 1930. Farson asked Irwin what he really thought of Gandhiji. "The first time I saw Gandhi", was the reply, "I was tremendously impressed by his holiness. The second time I was tremendously impressed by his legal astuteness. The third time I was sure of it". "Of which, your Excellency?", asked Farson. Lord Irwin merely smiled and looked down into the Himalayas. "That is for you to decide", he said.

Irwin diplomatically evaded answering this direct question. But it is obvious that he laid more emphasis on Gandhiji's legal astuteness than on his holiness. Farson pays a high compliment to Irwin in these words:

"I think he is the finest Englishman I have ever met—with perhaps the exception of honest George Lansbury."

Irwin left India in April, 1931. He was succeeded by Lord Willingdon. It was unfortunate that he should have left within a month of his Pact with Gandhiji for if he had stayed on till the end of the year, he would have seen to it that the terms of the Pact would have been honourably implemented on both sides. The fact is that neither the British Bureaucracy nor the front and second rank followers of Gandhiji were pleased with the Pact and both these elements more consciously than unconsciously sabotaged the Pact in one form or another. Precious time was lost in petty quarrels and they unfortunately influenced Gandhiji. In the meanwhile, the world economic crisis overtook England badly and the Labour Government which was in office but never in power was shaken by the internal economic crisis. The bureaucracy in India took full advantage of the weakness of the Labour Government. Within four weeks of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Congress met in Karachi on 29th March under the presidentship of Vallabhbhai Patel. By his victory in the agitation at Bardoli in 1928, Vallabhbhai attained to the status and fame of an All-India leader and earned from Gandhiji the title of "Sardar" and was henceforth known as Sardar Patel. Vallabhbhai advocated Dominion Status as against the Lahore Congress Resolution fifteen months earlier on Independence. Vallabhbhai also supported the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. These were the two principal all-India issues in his Presidential Address. The rest of his speech was devoted to the problems of agrarian grievances and social and economic reforms. The Pact was adopted by the Congress. It stated the principle of constitutional development under the British with safeguards and whilst endorsing this, the Congress Resolution still harped on the Congress goal of Purna Swaraj.

Six days before the Congress met, Bhagat Singh and his two companions were executed for their terrorist activities. Vallabhbhai referred to them in his Presidential Address:

"The execution of young Bhagat Singh, Sukhdeo and Rajguru has filled the country with deep resentment. I cannot identify myself with their methods. I have no doubt that political murder is no less reprehensible than any other, but the patriotism, daring and sacrifice of Bhagat Singh and his comrades command my admiration. The heartless and foreign nature of the government was never more strikingly demonstrated

than in their carrying out the executions in the teeth of the all but universal demand for the commutation of the death sentence." The Congress passed a resolution on these executions drafted by Gandhiji and moved by Jawaharlal. It *inter alia* said:

"This Congress, while dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form, places on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of the late Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades, Sjts. Sukhdeo and Rajguru....."

Gandhiji, the apostle of non-violence, salved his conscience by condemning violence but at the same time admiring Bhagat Singh's violent activities. In the course of his speech, Jawaharlal admitted that he was not ashamed of the cult of violence, but he felt that that cult for the present could not be practised in the best interests of the country and there was the fear of indulging in communal strife when once the sword was unsheathed.

Jawaharlal anticipated that struggle with the British Government would have to be taken up once again. A few months later, terrorist outrages broke out in Bengal and Bombay and Gandhiji then regretted this Resolution. He felt that the cult of violence had been overdone, and he asked the political terrorists to desist from violence.

The Congress decided to participate in the Second Round Table Conference and it appointed and authorised Gandhiji to represent it at the Conference with the addition of such other delegates as the Working Committee may appoint to act under his leadership.

The Congress Working Committee met on April 1 and 2 to decide, among other things, the representation of the Congress at the Round Table Conference. Most of the members were of opinion that the deputation should consist of about 15 members, and the Government were quite willing to accommodate upto 20. Within 48 hours, Gandhiji received applications from about 150 Congress 'leaders' suggesting that they should be included in the Round Table Delegation. That would have meant selecting 15 out of these 150 and displeasing the remaining 135. So, Gandhiji decided to be the sole representative of the Congress! This was a great mistake and India has had to



pay dearly for the mistakes which Gandhiji made in London. He should have taken with him to name but three, Vallabhbhai, Dr. Ansari and Bhulabhai Desai.

Gandhiji wavered and wavered. He wanted to settle the communal problem before going to the Round Table Conference. He got himself involved in the petty incidents of quarrels between the Congressmen in the districts and the lower Government officials. He wavered and hesitated in regard to the communal problem, much to the dismay of his nationalist Muslim friends. He decided not to go to London. Further correspondence followed between the Viceroy—Lord Willingdon—and Gandhiji .

When Gandhiji was in this mood of suspense and uncertainty about his going to London early in August, C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar was appointed Acting Member for Law for three months and Willingdon asked him to meet Gandhiji in Bombay to find out what Gandhiji's difficulties were and what his terms for going to London would be. C.P. arrived in Bombay from Madras in the morning and he told me about his mission to Gandhiji. I saw him off again at the station when he left for Simla at 4 in the afternoon. He was cheerful. He said he had had a good talk with Gandhiji and Gandhiji had agreed to go to England. C.P. was to report to the Executive Council the result of his talk with Gandhiji but in the mean time he sent a telegram to Willingdon about his success with Gandhiji. As he reached Simla and went straight to the Viceregal Lodge for the Executive Council Meeting, Lord Willingdon told C.P. that within a few hours of his receiving C.P.'s telegram that Gandhiji had agreed to go to England, Gandhiji had sent a telegram to him to the effect that he had changed his mind and had decided not to go to England. This was not the first or the last time when Gandhiji had changed his mind and reversed his previous decision in a matter of hours.

On August 14, Gandhiji wrote to the Viceroy:

"The sum total of all the circumstances betrays a fundamental difference of outlook between us." The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was almost repudiated by both sides. Once again, correspondence was resumed between the Viceroy and Gandhiji resulting in Gandhiji's going to Simla for personal discussions with the Viceroy. In the meantime, the other Indian delegates had

left Bombay to go to London for the Second Round Table Conference. Gandhiji's talks with the Viceroy lingered on with Gandhiji almost agreeing to go to London and then immediately changing his decision. At last, late in the evening of the 27th August, Gandhiji told the Viceroy that he would go to England. They embraced each other. A special train had to be arranged from Simla to Kalka and other trains were held up to enable Gandhiji to reach Bombay in time to sail on August 29th in the s.s. "Rajputana". He reached London on September 12th.

## CHAPTER XXX

### SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

By the time the Indian Delegation to the Second Round Table Conference reached London, there was a change for the worse in the political atmosphere in England. England was passing through a terrible economic crisis and the Labour Government, though in office but never in power, was shaky. Ramsay MacDonald betrayed the Labour Party and formed a National Government with himself as Prime Minister, with the Conservatives. Ramsay MacDonald was only a Prime Minister in name and the power went into the hands of the Conservative Party, headed by Baldwin. This betrayal of his Party by Ramsay MacDonald resulted in the British Labour Party being routed and obliterated at the next general election a few weeks later.

Wedgwood Benn, the Labour Secretary of State for India was replaced by the Conservative Sir Samuel Hoare. In this tense atmosphere, Gandhiji reached London on 12th September.

On 21st September England went off the Gold Standard. I was in Agra on the 22nd and I read about England going off the Gold Standard as I returned from my first visit to the Taj Mahal at the lunch hour. On the 23rd at noon, I reached Simla. In order to protect India from financial crisis on this occasion, the Government of India issued an Ordinance, divorcing the Rupee from the Pound, so that England's economic crisis would not hit India adversely. The Government of India, without consulting Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, issued an Ordinance delinking the Rupee from the Pound. But the next day Hoare cabled to the Government of India to issue another ordinance linking back the Rupee to the Pound. I was in Simla all that fortnight of this crisis in constant contact with Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, the Acting Member for Law, and Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola, President of the Indian Legislative Assembly. Lord Willingdon and all the Members of

his Executive Council protected against Sir Samuel Hoare's cable and offered to resign in a body. This included not only the Indian Members like C.P. and Zafrullah but also the I.C.S. British Members of the Council and the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, himself. The Executive Council met every day at the Viceregal Lodge from 6-00 p.m. to 1-00 a.m. This did not suit Sir Samuel Hoare and the Tory Coalition Government. Hoare got hold of Ghanshyamdas Birla who was in London for the Round Table Conference as one of the representatives of the Indian Commercial Community and between them, they managed to get a Press interview from Gandhiji on this rupee-pound crisis. Reuters circulated Gandhiji's interview that nothing hasty should be done at this crisis and the *status quo* should be maintained! Samuel Hoare cabled back to the Viceroy after release of Gandhiji's interview that the resignations of the Viceroy and the Executive Council were not accepted and that they should carry on, that the man who counted and who could speak for India had advised *status quo* and, therefore, nothing could be done and the *status quo* must be maintained. Hoare called upon the Government of India to issue the Ordinance that the Pound and the Rupee would swim and sink together. Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola and C.P. Ramswamy Aiyar were wild with rage that Gandhiji should have let down the country because of his ignorance of the problem. I was in the President's gallery next day when the Assembly met. Shanmukham Chetty, the leader of the opposition, made one of the most brilliant speeches that I ever heard criticising the Government for this betrayal of India's interest, admitting, however, that this was not the fault of the Government of India and that orders had come from Whitehall.

Within a week after this, heavy export of gold from India started inspite of the opposition of India.

C.P.'s part in this Gold Standard crisis was most prominent and if Gandhiji had not interfered C.P. would have won a great battle for India.

The prominent delegates at the Second Round Table Conference were Gandhiji, Sapru, Sastri, Setalvad, Jayakar, Ambedkar and the Aga Khan. Jinnah was there but he was not able to take a prominent part in the discussions, because having failed to get a reasonable settlement from the Congress, the Mus-

lim leadership went into the reactionary hands of the Aga Khan. Of course, the most important delegate was Gandhiji, the sole representative of the Congress. Fortunately, Setalvad and Sastri have left first-hand records—with detailed references to Gandhiji—of the events of the three months during which the Second Round Table Conference was in session; Setalvad in his "Recollections and Reflections" and Sastri in his numerous private letters to his friends in India. These letters are most revealing, particularly because Sastri's public statements and speeches were often at variance with the frankly expressed views in his letters and these public statements add on the side of too much caution. These letters and Setalvad's reminiscences, along with the official records of the Conference make sad reading as they clearly show the political blunders of Gandhiji both as regards the Federation and the communal problems vis-a-vis the important minorities such as the Muslims and the Depressed Classes.

Sir Samuel Hoare in his "Nine Troubled Years" gives a vivid and interesting picture of his meetings with Gandhiji and Gandhiji's work and activities inside and outside the Round Table Conference. At the very first meeting between Hoare and Gandhiji soon after the latter's arrival in London, the Secretary of State told him: "I sincerely wish to see responsible self-government in India. I believe I can have a Bill passed that would make this possible, but in view of British public opinion, Conservative anxieties in Parliament, and not least, communal fears in India, I cannot promise you or any one else immediate Dominion Status." This statement went back on the announcement made by Irwin on 31st October, 1929. Even then, the Conservative diehards had objected to this promise of Dominion Status by Irwin, but both the British Government and Irwin had stuck to their promise. The change of Government from Labour to National made Hoare defiant of Indian aspirations under guise of frankness.

In his letter dated September 22, Sastri wrote from London:

"Gandhi is come. That is good. But he is a problem himself..... Birla says Gandhi is come only to break the Conference—why do we bother about anything? It is all one vast confusion."

Two days later, Sastri wrote :

"Rangaswamy told me (secretly) Gandhi seems resolved to break away and is only looking out for a decent excuse. Certainly, Birla, Dr. Jivraj Mehta and some others pull strongly that way. God knows. I don't meet him at all. Crowds are about him always. Even his entourage complain. His reputation hasn't improved here. Pandit Malviya looks scared and bewildered."

On 2nd October, Sastri wrote again of the developments:

"The omens are black. Gandhi is a harassed man but also a victim of his own greatness. He cannot get away from shibboleths and accept compromises. He says he will go away after stating his case which means after delivering his ultimatum. His aversion from harsh phrases explain the gentle manner. Mussalmans have treated him badly. His interviews have been prolonged and deliberate tortures, he says! But his idea is to put the blame for this on the British and break away. He explained this plan to a few of us who met him at dinner last night in Sapru's rooms. Some of us frankly disapproved, others mumbled vague hesitation. But he knows we don't go with him. Malviya cannot part from him—faithfully like a Hindu wife to her lord, though she may pray others to come and advise him. The Aga Khan and his followers haven't abated one jot of their demands and backed by the Tory gang, are resolved to have their pound of flesh. Even Sapru has given them up. The adjournment of a week has been sponsored by Gandhi, but he told us he had consented at the bidding of the Moslems, to take the discredit for what, he had no doubt, will prove a dismal failure. So, it is the merest delusion.

Sir Samuel Hoare was among the guests last night. He left early but not without breaking a most courteous lance or two with Gandhi and Malviya on the beneficence of British rule in India. You guess how the weary theme went to and fro.

Gandhi has had intimate talks with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. He complains of the former's treatment of him. It would appear the Prime Minister talked in a high philosophical vein and disdained to come to precise terms. The latter is frank and straight but hard, narrow and unyielding. He perhaps has disclosed a little of the plan he has found—

provincial autonomy for the present and the firm hand over Congress by a pact of Britishers and Moslems.

Dr. Ambedkar has, contrary to original intentions, been persuaded to stand out for separate electorates and weightage. Gandhi questions his representative character and is sure the untouchables don't want any such thing. Ambedkar is aggressive to Gandhi who of course is careful to show that he is neither offended nor annoyed.

Altogether the Indian show is pitiful."

On 7th October, Sastri wrote:

"Gandhi, though all go to him, is thoroughly non-plussed. He expressed himself desperate and defeated. His own reputation hasn't been enhanced by the speeches he has made here. We are meeting at 11 to-night to make a last attempt at solution. Tomorrow Gandhi proposes to confess failure. But he will try to put the blame on the Government and ask them to declare India free and then appoint a tribunal to settle the communal problem. The British will oppose the proposal. So will all the minorities. Malviya and Birla and Rangaswamy Aiyangar and Mrs. Naidu support him loyally. At present the sky is black."

Setalvad gives a vivid and lucid picture of Gandhiji's work and activities in London. Gandhiji, though putting up in the East End used to come to the flat taken in the West End where prominent Indian delegates were meeting regularly. Sapru, Sastri, Setalvad, Jayakar and Cowasji Jehangir attended these meetings. Setalvad goes on: "At these meetings, Gandhi used to sit on the floor surrounded by his immediate followers squatting with him on the floor. While we were discussing various matters, Gandhi used to have with him a spinning wheel and used to go on spinning. One day, my patience was much taxed and I said: "Mr. Gandhi, we are now discussing a very important question and can't you leave aside for a moment your spinning wheel and devote undivided attention to what we are considering?" He said: "If it pleases you I would do so", and he put aside the spinning wheel for awhile but took it up again. On another occasion when he said something which betrayed want of knowledge of the bearings of the question that was being discussed, I asked him whether he had ever read the Government of India Act of 1919. He said he had not! Then I put

to him: "If so, how do you consider yourself competent to express an opinion on the present question the consideration of which requires knowledge of the existing law?" He turned to me and completely disarmed me by saying in all humility in Gujarati to the following effect: "As an elder brother you have the right to rebuke me and it is my duty to accept the rebuke." Setalvad was only four years older than Gandhiji.

At the R.T.C., Gandhiji unnecessarily and unjustifiably insulted and tried to humiliate the Muslim leaders, Dr. Ambedkar and all other Indian delegates including Sapru, Sastri, Setalvad, Jayakar who were rendering yeomen services to the country. He said that he alone represented the Muslims and the Depressed Classes and that all the other Indian delegates represented no vital interests in India. They were only the nominees of the British Government. Ambedkar leapt to fame as an All-India leader and as a statesman by his speech in the First R.T.C. He said that he was placing the viewpoint of one-fifth of the total population of British India which was reduced to the position worse than the serf and the slave. He went on, the untouchables in India were also for replacing the existing Government by a Government of the people, for the people and by the people. In 1929, Ambedkar had said that India was likely to attain responsible self-government in 4-5 years. Gandhiji whom Ambedkar met in Bombay a few months later for the first time admitted, referring to this R.T.C. speech that he (Ambedkar) was a "patriot of sterling worth." But unfortunately this meeting did not bring the two leaders together. Gandhiji realised that Ambedkar was far too independent to suit him and he never forgave Ambedkar. Gandhiji antagonised Ambedkar.

Ambedkar's "ruling passion" as he frankly admitted was hatred: "I hate injustice, tyranny, pompousness and humbug, and my hatred embraces all those who are guilty of them. I want to tell my critics that I regard my feelings of hatred as a real force. They are the reflex of the love I bear for the causes I believe in and I am in no wise ashamed of it." Ambedkar carried this hatred too far both in his private and public life. If he had taken a more sober point of view he could have rendered more positive and constructive service to his community and the country. But he could not forget and forgive the humiliations which had been showered on him during the earlier



years because of his being born an 'untouchable'.

Gandhiji's affection for the depressed classes was genuine. He wanted to befriend them. At the same time, he wanted to make political capital of his affection and this Ambedkar rightly resented. Curiously enough, Gandhiji also believed in the four castes which put the depressed classes on the lowest rung of society.

The Communal and the Depressed Classes problems would have been settled in London at the R.T.C. but Gandhiji was under the influence of Hindu Communalists—Pandit Malviya, Jayakar and G. D. Birla. When the impasse was reached, the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald asked all the Members of the Minorities Committee to sign a requisition authorising him to settle the communal problem and to pledge themselves to accept his decision. Gandhiji signed this pledge along with other members, but Ambedkar did not.

Gandhiji conveniently forgot that by the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, he had agreed to Dominion Status with safeguards. He harped on the Karachi Congress Resolution and demanded that Responsible Government must be established *immediately* and *in full* both at the Centre and in the Provinces, including complete control over the finance, army, defence and external relations. Further, Gandhiji did not want any safeguards and he did not want the Governor General to be given any special powers.

But once again he made a somersault.

Gandhiji spent a week-end at Oxford with Lord Sankey. Gandhiji speaking at the drawing-room meeting at Balliol College intimated to the Prime Minister that he (Gandhiji) might be willing to see the introduction of provincial autonomy as a first measure, if within six months of its introduction, the way was prepared for responsibility at the Centre. Gandhiji thus fell in with the scheme of the Conservative die-hards who were willing to concede Provincial Autonomy but no responsibility at the Centre. Louis Fischer has written that Gandhiji worked twenty-one hours a day from 4 a.m. to 1 a.m. and Fischer quietly adds that these long hours of work without rest and sleep and with no time to devote to thinking, told upon the quality of Gandhiji's work! This somersault of accepting Provincial Autonomy to start with exasperated and shocked Sapru, Sastri,

Setalvad and Jayakar; and on his return to London, Gandhiji was severely rebuked, for giving away India's case for responsible self-government. Gandhiji realised his mistake after considerable discussion.

The result was that a letter dated 6th November was sent to the Prime Minister. It was signed among others by Gandhiji, Malviya, Sapru, Sastri, Setalvad, Jayakar, Cowasji Jehangir, Purshottamdas Thakordas, Sarojini Naidu, Ramaswamy Mudaliar, Rangaswamy Aiyangar, G. D. Birla, N. M. Joshi, V. V. Giri and others.

The following is the text of the letter:

"It is with deep concern that we hear rumours to the effect that provincial autonomy will be introduced as a first step in the political reconstruction of India, leaving federation and responsibility at the Centre to follow later. We have read the statement to the contrary which appeared in the daily press this morning. The rumours, however, are so strong and persistent that we must ask leave to place our views before you beyond the possibility of doubt. The needs of the present situation can be met only by a complete and comprehensive scheme, of which responsibility at the Federal Centre must be as integral a part as the autonomy of the federating units. To divide the scheme into parts and bring into immediate operation one of the parts and postpone the other is to arouse fears of uncertainty and suspicions of the intentions of the Government.

"We realize the importance of the minorities question of which no satisfactory solution has yet been found. But at the same time we desire to express our clear opinion that it must not be allowed to block the way of a full and comprehensive scheme of responsible Government, which alone can provide an adequate settlement of a pressing problem."

Ramsay MacDonald asked Jayakar what he was to do if Gandhiji makes one statement on a Saturday and makes a contrary statement on the following Monday. Jayakar gave a good reply when he said: "If a man makes two inconsistent statements, you must accept the latter as the correct one."

The Minorities Committee not having reached any settlement was postponed twice at Gandhiji's suggestion. At last on

October 8, Gandhiji said at the Committee meeting that it was with deep regret and deeper humiliation that he had to announce that the negotiations had fallen through and he suggested that the Committee should adjourn *sine die*! On this, after some discussion, Ambedkar said:

"The Mahatma has been always claiming that the Congress stands for the depressed classes and that the Congress represents depressed classes more than I or my colleagues can do. To that claim, I can only say that it is one of the many false claims which irresponsible people keep on making although the persons concerned with regard to these claims have been invariably denying them".

In a note to the Minorities Committee, Setalvad said *inter alia*:

"As regards the separate *versus* joint electorates, it is obvious that in the Provinces where the Muslims are in a minority their coming into the joint electorates is more in their interest and for their protection. Once effective safeguards are provided, in the matter of religion, culture, personal laws, social practices, education, fair share in the public services, adequate representation in the legislature, there is no clash or divergence of interest between the different communities, and it is really safer for minorities to come into the joint electorate. Unless the Muslim voters have a voice in the election of the majority community members, the former could have no hold on the latter. This has been recognised by important Muslim leaders such as H. H. The Aga Khan, Mr. Jinnah and others, and if they are given reservation of seats, they will be quite secure".

Setalvad further remarks:

"At that time Mr. Jinnah was quite in agreement with this idea. He himself had felt for considerable time that he would, if allowed, prefer to stand for election to the legislature from the general electorate. In those days, if he had been allowed to stand through the general electorate, he would undoubtedly have been returned by a large majority".

Setalvad's diagnosis is perfectly correct. I can assert that Jinnah in the Twenties and even in the early Thirties could have won hands down against any candidate of any political party or community. He was the most important and popular leader in

**Bombay.**

Gandhiji attended the King's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace to the R. T. C. delegates. Hoare wondered if Gandhiji would go to it. Hoare gives an interesting story:

"Would Gandhi go to it? And if he accepted, how would the leader of Civil Disobedience be received by King George V? The answers to both these questions were in some doubt. To clear up the second, I asked the King for an Audience. His Majesty's reaction was much as I had expected. "What! Have this rebel fakir in the Palace after he has been behind all these attacks on my loyal officers?" Although this outburst was the first answer to my question, it was by no means the King's last word. Having let off steam, he started to discuss the arrangements for the party, to which he at once assured that Gandhi would be invited. It was only towards the end of the Audience that he had a slight return of his earlier irritation when he protested against having "the little man" in the Palace with "no proper clothes on, and bare knees". However, His Majesty was finally mollified, and an invitation without any conditions as to clothes was sent to Gandhi, and it was immediately accepted".

At the Party, Hoare introduced Gandhiji to the King. Hoare goes on to say:

"When I presented him, there was a difficult moment. The King was obviously thinking of Gandhi's responsibility for civil disobedience. However, when they were once started, the King's simple sincerity and Gandhi's beautiful manners combined to smooth the course of the conversation, though more than once I became nervous when the King looked resentfully at Gandhi's knees. When the conversation was drawing to an end, the King, the most conscientious of monarchs, evidently thought that it was his duty to warn Gandhi of the consequences of rebellion. Just, therefore, as Gandhi was taking his leave, His Majesty could not refrain from uttering a grave warning, "Remember, Mr. Gandhi I won't have any attacks on my Empire!" I held my breath in fear of an argument between the two. Gandhi's *savoir faire* saved the situation with a grave and deferential reply "I must not be drawn into a political argument in Your Majesty's Palace after receiving Your Majesty's hospitality". They then took leave of each other as friendly guest and host. A very honest King, and a great diplomat, I

thought to myself, and what exquisite worldly manners the unworldly possess!"

A few feet standing behind the King as A.D.C.s were a senior Indian prince and the then Prince of Wales (now Duke of Windsor). As the King shook hands with Gandhiji, the Indian Prince whispered to Windsor: "This is the beginning of the end of the British Empire."

On 1st December, the Prime Minister, winding up the R.T.C. declared that the British Government's policy favoured central responsibility on a federal basis, subject to transitional reservations and safeguards, and Provincial Autonomy in British India. A single statute would include both the aspects, to be implemented as far as possible simultaneously, though Provincial Autonomy need not necessarily wait if Federation should take time. In as much as the Conference failed to arrive at an agreed solution to the Minorities question, the British Government would be compelled to supply a provisional scheme in order that constitutional progress might not be held up.

A day earlier Sastri made an emotional dramatic appeal to Gandhiji. He exhorted Gandhiji:

"Yes, Mahatma, if I may apostrophise you, forgetting for a moment the Prime Minister, your duty hereafter is with us. Have you the heart, I ask you, still to lead your people, trustful and obedient, through the valley of humiliation if it be not necessary—and I contend it is no longer necessary? The steps that we have taken so far round this table make a distinct stage in advance. It seems to me that you and I and other friends here, working together, can frame this constitution and so shape it that, while deriving the most that it can yield, we can also look forward with confidence to a future when we shall be enabled to perfect it and that at no distant date. Believe me, Mahatma, that in your hands more than those of any other single Indian lies our future progress. We can be of some use to you. Take us in hand. Do not dismiss us as people whose ideas are still evolving and may be long in reaching the heights of Congress wisdom. Believe me that with you and with your chosen associates we can fashion our constitution to great ends and India will have cause to be truly thankful that you changed your plans and came here. Circumstances today demand that you should change your plans, dismiss Civil Disobedience from your mind

and take up this work in a spirit of complete trust in us and of faith in the British people too."

The operative part of Sastri's exhortation to Gandhiji was "Don't plunge the country into the negative and destructive path of Civil Disobedience". He clothed this advice in most flowery language which Sastri alone, with his great oratorical powers, could use.

Ramsay MacDonald speaking immediately after—and this was at 2 a.m. paid a glowing tribute to Sastri:

"I cannot leave this Chair without one word of tribute to that magnificent statement to which we have just listened."

Gandhiji left London on 9th December and on his way to Bombay, he had meetings with Mussolini and Madame Montessori in Rome. When he was on his way to Brindisi, he learnt that an Italian paper hostile to the British had published a fictitious interview from Gandhiji saying that in India he would restart the Civil Disobedience movement. Gandhiji had given no such interview and he cabled to Hoare that the report was a complete fabrication. Hoare says: "Whilst this disclaimer brought me great relief, the harm was unfortunately done. The lie had already spread over the world and had been accepted in London and Delhi as clear proof of Gandhi's irreconcilable opposition". The diehards in England and India—the British Tories and the Indian Bureaucracy—took full advantage of this fabricated interview. Gandhiji had assured Samuel Hoare before he left for India that he would keep the door of reconciliation open; he would strain every nerve to avoid a breach with Government.

Regarding Churchill's mischievous and disastrous obstruction and opposition to substantial reforms in India including Federation, Hoare comments sorrowfully:

"I am not an impartial judge of Churchill's action. None the less, I may perhaps make two comments. From the point of view of India, the consequences were altogether bad. His formidable opposition embittered a constitutional discussion that should have been kept free of recrimination. It delayed by many months and perhaps years the passing of the Act, when every day's delay compromised the chance of settlement. If the Act had reached the Statute Book in 1933 instead of 1935,

I am convinced that it would have been in effective operation before the war started. Even more serious than delay was the atmosphere created by years of Parliamentary wrangle, during which Churchill was constantly attacking and I as constantly defending the safeguards in the Bill, with the inevitable result that Indians came to believe that instead of giving them the fullest possible opportunity for obtaining responsible government, we were intent upon tying them up in a strait-jacket."

Gandhiji arrived in Bombay on 28th December, 1931, after a four months' absence from India. To understand the political situation at the time when Gandhiji returned, it is necessary to look back to this period of Gandhiji's absence. During these four months, disruptive forces gathered momentum. The followers of Gandhiji in the Provinces had never whole-heartedly accepted the Truce embodied in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and they were anxious to resume the fight. There was no all-India leader other than Gandhiji who could restrain them. Two main streams of such influences—one in Bengal and the other in the United Provinces—and one other minor current in Bardoli conspired to undermine the entire edifice of the provisional settlement and bring it down in a crash. Bengal had its Chittagong and Hijli and what seemed to be retaliatory political assassinations and new Ordinances and exceptional methods to deal with the situation created by them. U.P. had its increasingly acute agrarian situation. The U.P. Congress was led by Jawaharlal. These troubles led to the promulgation of the Instigation Ordinance.

The Congress and the Government began to find fault with each other and the atmosphere of suspicion and fear and attributing of motives by both sides to each other led to political crisis. The British Bureaucracy in India which was never happy with Irwin and his Pact were spoiling for a fight and they made preparations to put down the Congress' negative and destructive activities. It was easy for them to get Willingdon to agree to their plans for repression. At the Congress Working Committee meeting held in Bombay on 7th and 8th November, a resolution was passed authorising the President to cable to Gandhiji that his further continuance in the R.T.C. appeared to the Committee to be unnesessary, but in view of various facts and circumstances which were better known to him as he was on the spot, the Committee left the final decision to him; further Gandhiji's

attention was drawn to the rapidly worsening situation in Bengal, the Frontier Province, the United Provinces and elsewhere. The Committee were of opinion that Gandhiji's early return to India was desirable!

On the day that Gandhiji left London to return to India—9th December, 1931—Sastri referring to his impassioned appeal to Gandhiji at the R.T.C. on 1st December wrote to Gandhiji:

"I spoke straight on as the thoughts came. They were genuine and for months and months familiar companions. For, believe me, one who thinks of India's welfare from my standpoint cannot conceive of a greater gain to the cause at present than your hearty co-operation in the work of reconstruction. Bengal and the U.P. may still destroy all prospect of it. In that case I see nothing but misery ahead. Let me entreat you, before you decide in that sense, explore every possible avenue of peace".

As if in response to the Working Committee's resolution of 7th November asking Gandhiji to return to India, the Government of India by a Circular letter on 19th December alerted the Provincial Governments regarding the anticipated struggle with the Congress as a result of the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee which was to meet at Bombay soon after Gandhiji's return. The *casus belli* included a general revival of the civil disobedience movement, the support of the no-tax campaign in U.P. or the boycott of British goods or institutions; if the Congress voted for any of these policies, it was to be considered a declaration of war against constituted authority. The Bombay Government went panicky. They wrote to the Government of India:

"The Governor-in-Council considers that the moral effect of Mr. Gandhi's internment would be far greater and that it would have a more valuable effect in showing the determination and power of Government to crush the Civil Disobedience movement, if Mr. Gandhi were removed to Andamans, or possibly Aden might be considered in order to place him beyond reach of political exploitation."

On arrival in Bombay on 28th December, Gandhiji was greeted with the news of the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru, and shooting on the Frontier. This news unnerved Gandhiji. He addressed a largely attended public meeting on the night of his



arrival. Gandhiji welcomed the news of Pandit Jawaharlal's and Mr. Sherwani's arrest, of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's deportation, and of the shootings on the Frontier of unarmed crowds as the most fitting Christmas boxes that Lord Willingdon could send him. He condemned as reprehensible the murder of a Bengal magistrate by two girls and also condemned as unbefitting of any civilised Government the Ordinance in Bengal which was calculated to emasculate a whole province. The U.P. and the Frontier Ordinances were, if anything, even worse and he could see in the atmosphere no sign to justify the hopes for peace that he had been nursing. But he did not, he could not in the nature of things advise Satyagraha, without exploring all the avenues still open to him. He warned the people, however, that if the campaign had to be resumed, it would be a much more terrible ordeal for the people, "Bullets, this time, instead of or in addition to lathis. Be ready to offer yourselves willing sacrifices on the alter of freedom. Pledge yourselves to go through the utmost suffering and also to refrain from the least little injury to any one".

On the 29th, Gandhiji telegraphed to the Viceroy at Calcutta if the latter would see him. But, unfortunately, he mixed up this request with a detailed description of the Bengal, U.P. and N.W.F. Ordinances. The Viceroy replied that he could not see Gandhiji with the conditions implied in Gandhiji's telegram. Before this reply came, the Congress Working Committee, on the advice of Gandhiji, passed a lengthy resolution threatening to revive civil disobedience, boycott of all foreign goods, including British goods, picketing of liquor shops and making salt illegally. Gandhiji sent another telegram to the Viceroy enclosing along with it the civil disobedience resolution of the Working Committee. This was construed by the Viceroy and his Government as a threat and the Viceroy again replied on the 2nd January refusing to give an interview to Gandhiji. Gandhiji sent his last telegram to the Viceroy on 3rd January reiterating his resolve for starting civil disobedience.

On the 4th January, Government came down with a heavy hand. Not only Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai were arrested and not only other leaders were arrested in their respective Provinces, but also active Congress workers all over India were taken into custody. It must have taken Government a long time to

prepare the lists of hundreds of such Congressmen for the purpose of arresting them without specifying charges. Once again, gloom and darkness prevailed over the country. 1932 started badly for India and thousands and thousands of Congressmen and Congress volunteers were jailed.

The question arises—was Willingdon right in refusing to meet Gandhiji after the latter's return to India? The Government point of view was that as Gandhiji had mixed up his requests for interview to the Viceroy with the threat to start civil disobedience, the Viceroy was justified in refusing Gandhiji's request. The trouble was that both Willingdon and Gandhiji were allergic to each other.

The second question is what would Irwin have done at this critical moment? For one thing, I think Gandhiji's telegram to the Viceroy would have been in a friendly tone. Irwin would have, I think, agreed to meet Gandhiji and it is possible that between the two, they would have been able to come to terms, which would have meant putting off once again the threat of civil disobedience. In that case, the Reforms envisaged at the end of the Second Round Table Conference, would have progressed satisfactorily, with full co-operation of Gandhiji and the Congress. But, Irwin was not there and Willingdon who was a tool in the hands of the bureaucracy decided otherwise.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### AFTERMATH OF SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

THUS 1932 began most inauspiciously and disastrously for India. In the first four months—January to April—the movement went from strength to strength in spite of the fact that not only the top leaders of the Congress but also 60,000 Congress workers from all over the country were clapped into jail under the ordinance without trial. A Congress-minded industrialist who kept out of active participation in politics told me that his firm had made a big contribution to the civil disobedience movement by making it possible to send over 200 young men to jail. He explained that the economic conditions in India were bad and the position of middle classes was desperate. When they came to him for jobs he asked them to take to civil disobedience and go to jail and he promised to maintain their families by giving monthly allowance of Rs. 50/- to the families during their period of incarceration. The movement was taken up by more Congress workers. They organised the publication of unauthorised cyclostyled Congress Bulletins (daily). These bulletins called upon the people of Bombay not only to boycott British goods imported into India but also boycott British owned cotton textile mills and British cotton firms. This boycott was successful. The British firms not only felt humiliated but further they felt the effect of this boycott on their business. They were angry particularly because they had as businessmen no power to fight back this boycott. Some of them—I am writing this from personal knowledge—came to terms secretly with the underground Congress workers, who permitted them to trade in the name of the Indian stooges of the British firms. They were thus able to carry on their business clandestinely but all the same they felt more humiliated and loss of self-respect. The underground Congress workers were paid the price by way of contribution of funds imposed as fines by the illegal Con-

gress organisations. But the British firms were all the more eagerly waiting for an opportunity to wreak vengeance. The British commercial communities in other important business centres in India like Calcutta suffered similar humiliations. They took full advantage of the anger of the British bureaucracy in India against the Congress and they found in Lord Willingdon a weak and complacent Viceroy who was ready to support the unholy alliance between the British commercial community and the British bureaucracy. A secret circular issued by Sir Edward Benthall, leader of the British commercial community, with headquarters in Calcutta, addressed to the Associated Chamber of Commerce exposed their conspiracy against Indian interests. This secret circular showed that the right wing of the British Government had made up their minds to break up the Round Table Conference and to fight the Congress. It further showed that Europeans in India only wanted such changes as would make administration more efficient and not democratic reforms. Benthall wanted to rope into his unholy alliance the Muslim element in the country and this was made easy for him because Jinnah did not return to India, having decided to settle down in London and to practice law there.

Benthall wrote:

"The Muslims were a solid and enthusiastic team. Ali Imam, the Nationalist Muslim, caused no division. They played their cards with great skill throughout; they promised us support and they gave it in full measure. In return they asked us that we should not forget their economic plight in Bengal and we should "without pampering them" do what we can to find places for them in European firms so that they may get a chance to improve their material position and the general standing of their community". "On the whole, there was one policy of the British Nation and the British Community in India, and that was to make up our minds on a national policy and to stick to it. But after the general elections, the right wing of the Government made up its mind to break up the Conference and to fight the Congress. The Muslims who do not want responsibility at the Centre, were delighted. Government undoubtedly changed their policy and tried to get away with provincial autonomy, with a promise of Central reforms. We had made up our minds that the fight with the Congress was inevitable, we felt and said

that the sooner it came the better, but we made up our minds that for a crushing success we should have all possible friends on our side. The Muslims were alright; the Minorities Pact and Government's general attitude ensured that. So were the Princes and Minorities."

"The important thing to us seemed to be to carry the Hindu in the street as represented by such people as Sapru, Jayakar, Patro and others. If we could not get them to fight the Congress, and that, by one simple method of leaving no doubt in their minds that there was to be no going back on the Federal Scheme which broadly was also the accepted policy of the European Community, and we acted accordingly".

"The Muslims have become firm allies of the Europeans. They are very much satisfied with their own position and are prepared to work with us".

"It must not, however, be supposed that when we agree that reforms are necessary, we advocate democratic reform in every province. All that we mean is such change in the system of Government as will improve its efficiency".

The bureaucracy went one better. To crush the Civil Disobedience movement they created a reign of terror where they gave up all pretence of carrying on the government by rule of law.

The Delegation of the India League, London, which toured India during these months, summed up the position created by the Ordinances:

"In 1932 the Ordinances (12 in number) and now the Acts recently passed deprive the Indian people of the rights of personal freedom and safeguards, which, most British people believe, exist under British Law everywhere."

Writing to Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald on 15th April, 1932, Srinivas Sastri says:

"The severities attending the measures that the various Governments take to put down the disruptive activities of the Congress have assumed grave proportions. You have enough experience of Indian executive methods to judge the actual incidence upon the people of all restrictive and repressive action. The Police in India, ill-educated, ill-paid, and drawn from low strata of society and accustomed to rough modes, when actually authorised and encouraged to strike persons in the streets, irre-

spective of station, age or sex, cannot be expected to restrain themselves. Stories of inhuman and barbarous chastisement go about, creating bitterness and racial and communal rancour. Believe me, there will be the very devil to pay for another generation. The world is learning to drop corporal punishment everywhere. Gaols, schools and even homes have less and less of it. The dignity of the human being as a human being, instead of being merely the Christian ideal, is getting to be realised as a fact in all relations of daily life. We may soon witness the complete abandonment of bodily violence as a means of discipline or even of revenge in the civilised world. What will then be said of a Government under whose explicit orders respectable men and women, performing what they consider to be duties of citizenship, could be dragged along the streets and beaten mercilessly? Is it any wonder that Government find themselves every now and then compelled to condone barbarities and to deny notorious facts? If a fiat went forth from Whitehall to Delhi that these things should stop, it would be long before the police really changed their ways and law and order came to be respected, and it would be very long indeed before the people forgot their sufferings and forgave the authors."

The Civil Disobedience Movement though still going fairly strong, showed signs of weakening from the month of May onwards.

In 1953 was published "In the Shadow of the Mahatma"—a personal Memoir—by G. D. Birla. It reproduces Birla's letters to Gandhiji and Gandhiji's letters to Birla right from the early twenties till Gandhiji's passing away. This correspondence shows that Birla responded generously and abundantly to Gandhiji's appeals for funds for Khadi and untouchability movements. This financial assistance no doubt put Birla in a strong position with Gandhiji and Gandhiji, consciously or unconsciously, was influenced by Birla in Birla's political opinions. This book throws light on the events of 1932 when Birla carried on an extensive correspondence with Samuel Hoare. In these letters, Birla writes with great confidence, as he knew, that he had more than tacit support from Gandhiji and some hold on him. Birla kept Gandhiji in touch with this correspondence by sending him copies. Birla was rightly anxious to see amicable rela-

tions being maintained politically and economically between the United Kingdom and India. He conveyed to the British statesmen the impression that Gandhiji being a non-co-operator could not directly negotiate with the British, but that he (Birla) could come to terms with the British and Birla was confident that in that event Gandhiji was likely to accept such a settlement. Birla's object was to wean Gandhiji away from the "extremists". The extremists in those times whom Birla had in mind were Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose .

The best parts of Birla's book are Chapters 15 and 16 entitled "London Contacts" and "High Hopes in England". They give a good picture of Birla's efforts to get the British statesmen to take a more friendly view of Gandhiji. His talks with Ramsay MacDonald, Churchill, Baldwin and others in England make an excellent story and he gave detailed reports of these talks to Gandhiji. To understand the events of those months, it is pertinent to quote from Birla's Diary and letters:

Birla met Sir John Anderson, Governor of Bengal, on 10th April, 1932. I shall quote from his diary:

"He seemed to be a very shrewd and intelligent man. He speaks very little, and seems to understand economic questions very well. I started the discussion on the weather and asked if he was not feeling uncomfortable owing to the heat. We immediately came to close grips on more important subjects. I expressed the hope that his visit to Simla would bring better results. He enquired if I meant better results in economic spheres. I said I did not expect any improvement in economic spheres. I was referring to politics. Economic improvement was impossible. The world was suffering from a bad monetary system and until the system was changed it could not improve except by natural adjustment which should take a pretty long time, and may even cause a serious upheaval in the construction of society. He agreed with me that stability of prices was better, but who could be entrusted with the complicated management of a 'managed' currency. I told him there was no intricacy. If we undertook to provide so many grams of gold in exchange for rupees, I said, "Why cannot you undertake similarly to provide 100 index figures for one rupee?" He said an index figure was a complicated thing. I agreed but pointed out that nothing was perfect in this world. He foresaw specula-

tion as a result. I pointed out the speculation would be discouraged except in gold. He liked the idea but was nervous about putting the system in practice. I said only a dictator could do it. The world was suffering from a stupid democracy. We wanted democratic dictators. It sounded rather paradoxical, but he knew what I meant. I pointed out that 75 per cent of the political troubles were due to bad economics, India was suffering from a low level of prices which should immediately be put up by 50 per cent. He enquired whether it was necessary to have such a big rise. I said, yes, and pointed out that Sir Basil Blacket also agreed with me. I wanted him to study the whole question. In 1921 there was no unrest among cultivators. The political disturbance was confined to the working classes. Why is it that working classes are so quiet now and the whole agrarian population is full of discontent? He agreed and pointed out that the Congress made efforts to stir up labour but failed. I said I had made a deep study of the subject and found that except in the consumption of cloth, the villager had made cuts in all directions. This year he has been able to make both ends meet by selling gold, partial payments of land revenue and non-payment of interest. There would be no more gold left to sell next year and therefore he would stop entirely the payment of land revenue and taxes. I pointed out that my estate could collect only 5 per cent of the revenue in Chhota Nagpur. Whatever happened in India it was impossible to have any peace for the next 15 years, unless prices were raised, but we can escape the worst effect of this discontent, if political disturbance is removed from the scene, I pointed out that to me it appeared a most puzzling as well as a most simple affair. It was a simple affair because we were on common ground. Dominion Status with reservations and safeguards was more or less a common ideal for the time being. Gandhiji wanted to discuss safeguards. Why was this not discussed and why was he not allowed interviews and discussions on various matters? He remained silent. I tried to point out that Gandhiji was a reasonable man and explained to him my connections with Gandhiji. I told him that I had known Gandhiji since 1916, had been his ardent admirer since 1921 and worked with him in the R. T. C. I told him that I was one of the worst critics of the Government in political and



economic spheres. Though I did not take an active part in the Civil Disobedience Movement, I had done everything else to embarrass the Government and had very liberally subscribed to Gandhiji's constructive programmes. I could therefore claim that I knew which way Gandhiji's mind was running. He was a most reasonable man and very modest in outlook. I recognised that it was not possible to meet the full demand of the Congress but said that it was possible to introduce a Constitution which might be rejected by Gandhiji. What is the use of introducing a Constitution which would not be accepted? Sir John again agreed with me. He said a Constitution was coming in any case. He did not think it would not be of any use unless it was at least passively acceptable. I told him he could do much. He agreed with me about my description of Gandhiji. Findlater Stuart had spoken to him very highly of Gandhiji. He said doubts were expressed by himself to Findlater Stuart whether Gandhiji would not be rushed into the Civil Disobedience Movement; but Findlater Stuart told him no one on earth could rush Gandhiji into things which he did not want; but he said unfortunately he had been stampeded by his lieutenants. I assured him that his reading was incorrect. Gandhiji was rushed into things by Lord Willingdon. The Viceroy was not a man of imagination. Hailey was one. He was another. Lord Willingdon had no sympathy with Gandhiji. He did not know him and did not understand him. Sir John asked whether Gandhiji was a practical man. I said, immensely. He said that Findlater Stuart had said that he was not very practical. I said for a Western mind it was somewhat difficult to understand a philosophical mind like that of Gandhiji. He wanted to know how far Gandhiji would be prepared to accept reservations and safeguards. About the military, I told him that we realised we could not get immediate control but Gandhiji would suggest certain formulae which may be acceptable to all. About finance we were prepared to put ourselves in the position of a factory proprietor who had to deal with debenture holders. The debenture holder should not poke his nose into our day-to-day affairs so long as we paid him his dues. I proceeded further and tried to give him a constructive suggestion about the future. If Gandhiji was released and a satisfactory solution found about the terrorist movement, the

situation could be eased and Gandhiji could co-operate. He listened to these things with great interest and said evidently I knew more than many men in India. He would like to discuss things further with me on his return and wanted me to go to Darjeeling. I promised to go."

Birla was not wasting his time with Anderson. In his note submitted to the Government of India, Anderson suggested that the British Government should concede all the political demands of the Congress and thus satisfy India and then come to terms with the politically free India on economic problems between the two countries. Needless to say, Anderson's advice fell on deaf ears in Simla and Whitehall. Anderson was the only British high official who had the courage, foresight and intelligence to suggest a politically satisfactory settlement with India.

Birla continued this good work. He wrote to Lord Lothian who was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the India Office. He was as Birla says sympathetic to India's aspirations. He was in India in 1932 as Chairman of the Indian Franchise Committee. Birla had many talks with Lothian and before the report of Lothian Committee was published, Birla wrote to him a long letter on 4th May, 1932 'in a vain endeavour, as it turned out, to secure a practical victory for Gandhiji who was then in prison, and thus prevent the necessity for the future non-co-operation campaign.' This letter must be quoted in full:

"The newspapers report that your mission is completed and that you are flying back to England on the 11th. The report of your Committee will shortly be published and from what I hear I hope it will be satisfactory. You have been able to create a friendly impression on India and this is another gain. Let me pray that your association with India may be helpful in bringing about happy relations between the two countries.

"I do not wish to write to you anything just now about the present situation. With your keen sense of observation and friendly appreciation you know the situation as well as any Indian. Why I am writing to you is that I feel that at this critical time when many important issues are to be decided, I should again express my grave doubts about the success of the present dual policy as it is called. When we discussed the matter at the Calcutta Club you were convinced when you said

that the best method to help India was to rush the reforms with the utmost speed. I raised the point as to what would be the use of reforms which may not be worked by the nationalists, and the same question has been rising again and again in my mind. I am afraid I can say almost with certainty that no reforms could be successful unless these have a backing behind them of progressive Indian opinion. I admit that it may not be at present possible to bring about a compromise between a radical India and a reactionary Parliament, but on further thinking, I feel that it is not impossible to introduce a Constitution which may have the tacit consent of Gandhiji and men of his school. This at least would give some peace to India and I am convinced that it is possible to find a method of achieving at least this last object. I think there are two methods of achieving this object; either by securing the direct co-operation of Gandhiji or his indirect co-operation. The correspondence at present passing between Gandhiji and Sir Samuel Hoare encourages me to take a more cheerful view. The disadvantage of 1930 was that Gandhiji was not in touch with the rulers. That disadvantage fortunately this time does not exist. With goodwill on both sides, therefore, I think a way could be found.

Now let us analyse both the alternatives. First of all, is it possible to get his co-operation? I do not think it so difficult. Supposing the Ordinances are not renewed, what would then be Gandhiji's position? The last resolution of the Working Committee decided on a policy of Civil Disobedience unless substantial relief was granted in the direction of Ordinances. If the Ordinances are not renewed the position is substantially changed. Then the only question which will require solution will be the situation in N.W.F. Province and Bengal. In the U.P. so far as I understand, more remission has been granted than what was demanded by Jawaharlalji and therefore there should be no fresh difficulties. Supposing therefore that the Ordinances are not renewed and Gandhiji is released and granted an interview by the Viceroy and the Ordinances in Bengal and N.W.F. Province are discussed and a solution found of difficulties at both these places, then co-operation in constitution framing and release of all political prisoners follow automatically. The only difficulty which I foresee in this direction is that opinion at present is much more bitter than it was in March last

year. Gandhiji may find it difficult to carry with him the Congress to co-operate merely on the non-renewal of the Ordinances. The rank and file may ask: "What is it that India has gained that we again talk of peace with the Government?" Gandhiji can undoubtedly carry the Congress ultimately with him but he will have to work hard.

The second alternative may be easier of achievement. Supposing the Ordinances are not renewed, why should not some leaders working under friendly instructions from Gandhiji participate in framing the Constitution? Any compromise which may thus be arrived at, will at least have Gandhiji's indirect blessing. I wonder how far Gandhiji will like such a procedure, but I feel that it is worthwhile exploring the practicability of this proposal. After all Gandhiji's object is to get a good Constitution and if a Constitution could be secured which would not have his disapproval, there would be a substantial chance of such a Constitution being worked smoothly.

I am writing this for your consideration because I very strongly feel that the Government would be making the greatest blunder if, relying on the Musalmans, Depressed Classes and the Princes, they introduced a Constitution which would not meet with the approval of nationalist India. In such circumstances the struggle would continue and India would have no peace for a very long time to come. The Government should ignore the Congress only if it is their intention that no substantial advance is to be made. And I am afraid the man in the street quite naturally suspects the Government's *bona-fides* under this dual policy, as he reasonably asks what else would be the reason for ignoring the co-operation of the Congress. From the feeling prevalent in Calcutta I can see that even among non-official Europeans the question is being raised as to who is going to work the reforms. The leading article in the "Englishman" the day before yesterday also expressed sentiment somewhat on these lines. I therefore wish that no mistake of this kind should be made by the Government and avenues of securing the co-operation of the Congress should still be explored.

I wish you *bon voyage* and hope that I will soon send you my congratulations when your report is published.

I am seeing Sir John Anderson on the 10th and I intend to

tell him what I am writing to you."

I have considered it necessary to quote this letter in full as it throws light on Gandhiji's attitude as Birla correctly diagnosed it. Birla tries to impress on the British statesmen that they could make a new Constitution which, though rejected by the Congress, would be acceptable to Gandhiji!

Birla continued his work with Anderson and suggested on 19th July to Anderson that he should see Gandhiji. Anderson was willing to do so and a meeting between Gandhiji and Anderson would have been possible, but Gandhiji suddenly threw a bomb-shell and everything was upset.

On March 11, 1932, Gandhiji wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare from Yeraoda Central Prison reminding him of his (Gandhiji's) statement at the R.T.C. that he would "resist with my life the grant of separate electorate to the Depressed Classes." The Communal Award by the Prime Minister was expected to be announced any moment. Gandhiji warned the British Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorate for the Depressed Classes, he must fast unto death. Gandhiji hoped, however, that the British Government would not create separate electorate for the Depressed Classes.

Gandhiji also threatened a similar fast on the question of brutal repression by Government.

Samuel Hoare sent a non-committal reply on 13th April.

On the Communal Award giving separate electorate to the Depressed Classes being published on 17th August Gandhiji wrote to Ramsay MacDonald on 18th August that he would begin his fast unto death on 20th September, unless by that time the Government withdrew their scheme of giving separate electorate to the Depressed Classes.

Ramsay MacDonald gave a long reply on 8th September, regretting his inability to change his Award. He said: "We felt it our duty to safeguard what we believed to be the right of the Depressed Classes to a fair proportion of representation in the legislatures; we were equally careful to do nothing that would split off their community from the Hindu world."

Gandhiji adhered to his decision of fast unto death.

Vallabhbhai was unhappy about this decision and did not approve of it and told Gandhiji that his action would be misunderstood in the country. Vallabhbhai told Mahadev that

Bapu's (Gandhiji's) was an awkward method.

The news that Gandhiji was about to fast shook the country from one end to the other. The Government wanted to release Gandhiji on certain conditions but Gandhiji refused.

It is pertinent at this stage to discuss the advisability of Gandhiji's extreme step as well as the need for it. The Civil Disobedience movement was going in full force. The Government repression was severe and brutal. More than 60,000 Congress workers and leaders were in jail for the fight of freedom, (independence). Gandhiji suddenly forgot all the sacrifices of the people, forgot all about the struggle for independence, forgot the Civil Disobedience Movement which he himself had inaugurated. He side-tracked his whole campaign by raising a side-issue of communal electorate.

C. R. Das's remarks about the virtues and failing of Gandhiji's leadership are to the point:

"The Mahatma opens a campaign in a brilliant fashion; he works it up with unerring skill; he moves from success to success till he reaches the zenith of his campaign, but after that he loses his nerve and begins to falter".

Jawaharlal criticised Gandhiji's fast in strong language: "I felt annoyed with Gandhi for choosing a side issue for his final sacrifice. What would be the result on our freedom movement? Would not the larger issues fade into the background, for the time being at least? And if he attained his immediate object and got a joint electorate for the depressed classes, would not that result in a reaction and a feeling that something had been achieved and nothing more need be done for a while? And was not his action a recognition, and in part an acceptance, of the Communal Award and the general scheme of things as sponsored by the Government? Was this consistent with non-co-operation and civil disobedience? After so much sacrifice and endeavour, was our movement to tail off into something insignificant?"

"I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question and his frequent references to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set!"

My own reactions to Gandhiji's frequent recourse to fasts

are given in my letter entitled "Ethics of Fasting" published in the Times of India of January 12, 1953:

"I am sure Dr. Ambedkar would not mind a slight alteration in his suggestion regarding the passing of the Hindu Code Bill for which he wants "two fat women to fast". He should have really asked for two fat women to take a vow to fast for it is easier to take such a vow than to carry it out.

But Dr. Ambedkar is perfectly justified in thus ridiculing the whole institution of fasting which is nothing but a fraud, an act of coercion and blackmail. It is time that no serious notice is taken of fasts or threats of fasts which are generally undertaken after full propaganda and publicity.

On several occasions, Mahatma Gandhi, yielding to his "inner voice" went on two to three weeks' fast and quite often he himself admitted some time after the fast was over that it was wrong of him to have undergone the ordeal. Who then is to judge at what stage the "inner voice" was the real "inner voice" and not just an impulse of the moment?

On the 52nd day of the fast of the late Andhra leader Sri-ramulu, Mr. Nehru made a bold statement in Parliament that he could not yield to such coercion. But, after Sriramulu's death and the disorders and riots that broke out in its wake in Andhra, causing damage to property etc. of over three and a half crores of rupees, (this figure has not been officially admitted and the public are told that the damage is round about Rs. 50 lakhs), Mr. Nehru yielded. Did the Prime Minister, who has been known to be opposed to linguistic provinces, yield to the formation of Andhra State as the result of the death of the fasting satyagrahi or in view of the riots and disorder that followed it? And does it mean that, if similar disorders broke out in the Punjab, Karnataka or Maharashtra, he would go on yielding?

Public memory is proverbially and conveniently short. I should, therefore, like to remind your readers of the conversation between Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Besant as far back as February 1919, and later in 1920. I quote from my book on Gandhiji published in May, 1950.

"Dr. Besant told Gandhiji of the danger of mass civil disobedience movement. She had vast enough experience in her life of 72 years of the dangers of exciting mob frenzy which once excited could not be controlled. She told him

where Gandhi's movement of civil disobedience movement would lead to—burning of post offices, cutting telegraph wires, loss of respect for law and order, rioting and every kind of violent upheaval. Gandhi did not agree and did not accept her advice”.

“My sympathies go out to Mr. Nehru who has inherited a legacy from his leader, some aspects of which are negative and terrible, and for which he, along with the country, has to pay a heavy price. Is it not time we wake up to realities?”

At the time Gandhiji declared this fast, what did he think of Independence? In September, 1920, he promised Swaraj within a year, then extended the period by three months to December, 1921. In December, 1921, he refused Reading's offer for a Round Table Conference; Reading was willing to concede full Provincial Autonomy and some responsibility in the centre. He was willing to accept Dominion Status with self-government upto December 31, 1929, and he broke his conference with Irwin, on December 23 as Irwin was not in a position to concede this to him. From 1st January 1930, he wanted Independence and he would not be satisfied with Dominion Status. He and the Nehrus rejected out of hand the suggestions of the peace-makers, Sapru and Jayakar, in August 1930, for a compromise settlement. In March, 1931, he made the Gandhi-Irwin Pact envisaging Dominion Status but with safeguards which meant not Independence. On 1st January, 1932, he once again committed the country to Civil Disobedience.

But on July 16, 1932, Mahadev records (The Diary of Mahadev Desai, Vol. I):

“One of us (Vallabhbhai or Mahadev) wondered why lawyers as well as other classes among our people did not understand that the whole administration would break down if only a single class non-co-operated with it *en masse*. Hoare was happy so long as the police and the army were with him. If these non-co-operated, he might perhaps be shocked. In 1921 we were somewhat nearer our goal. “No”, said Bapu. “It was all superficial. The fact is that we were not ready for Swaraj even if it is offered today as on a plate. Its establishment would be signalized by a terrible civil war. I feel that as a result of their present



experience our people will have greater faith in *ahimsa*. The temple of Swaraj is being built, brick by brick, stone by stone. To reach and carry out decisions as to how we are to deal with the present situation — what is this if it is not Swaraj? But we are unable to see it as it is still to be crowned by a dome.”

These few sentences, I sorrowfully submit, explain the philosophy of Gandhiji on the attainment of Swaraj. He wanted the Temple of Swaraj to be built brick by brick, stone by stone, i.e., in course of time, at some distant future date. In the mean time, he wanted people to undergo suffering. Mrs. Besant had told me as far back as September, 1918, that Gandhiji did not want Swaraj. He only wanted suffering. No wonder then that he took the country off to a side-issue.

Gandhiji's fast began at Yeraoda at noon on 20th September. All roads led to Bombay and Poona. A conference was held in Bombay where among others were present Malaviya, Sapru, Jayakar, Rajgopalachari, Kelkar, Rajendra Prasad, G. D. Birla and Moonje. Some of them went to Poona. The emphasis then was on saving Gandhiji's life and that is why a quick settlement of the communal problem had to be brought about. Ambedkar bargained hard and he was recognised as the leader of the Depressed Classes which position Gandhiji had challenged and denied him at the London R.T.C. Ambedkar succeeded beyond his expectations. An agreement was finally reached on the sixth day of the fast, 26th September. Separate electorate was dropped but in return Ambedkar obtained doubled representation for the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures. The British Government accepted the Poona Pact and only then Gandhiji broke his fast.

In MacDonald's Communal Award, Depressed Classes were given 71 seats in all provincial legislatures put together, out of which not more than 10 were given in Bengal. In the Poona Pact, under the threat of Gandhiji's fast unto death, though separate electorates for Depressed Classes were abandoned, the Depressed Classes were given 148 seats out of which 30 were given in Bengal:

Setalvad comments:

“Thus, while Gandhi in London refused absolutely to agree to reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes on

the ground that there should be no separation between the Hindus and the Depressed Classes, in Poona he conceded not only reservation of seats but also separate primary elections, and gave them a larger number of seats than they would have been satisfied with in London."

Doubts soon began to be voiced about the wisdom of the Poona Pact, though at the time it was signed, it was hailed as a victory for Gandhiji and saved his life.

In a private letter, Sastri wrote:

"India breathes freely again. The Mahatma has ended his dreadful penance. In our joy we call it a miracle. But soon perspective will return to our vision, and we shall begin to perceive that our gains are dubious. Some people will even call it a mad bargain, somewhat like Moses and his spectacles in "The Vicar of Wakefield". Also, the Mahatma will find he has shot his bolt. The tension of feeling in the ten days of his fast has been so severe people won't submit to it another time. Even once was possible only in this superstitious country. For the moment, however, the feeling of relief is extraordinary. One first class dispute is also put out of the way."

As an immediate off-shoot of the Poona Pact, the All-India Anti-untouchability League was found on 30th September, 1932 with G. D. Birla as President.

Gandhiji continued to be in jail in Yeraoda. The Civil Disobedience Movement was still on but it had lost its tempo and was showing signs of fatigue. All Gandhiji's attention was diverted to anti-untouchability work.

Willingdon and Hoare did not want Sastri to go to the Third R.T.C. Willingdon wrote to Sastri on 2nd November:

"Further, I feel that I must have some influential people over here to help me with their advice on the many points on which we shall be asked our opinion during the discussion in London. I should feel happy if I could have the advantage of your and C.P.'s advice during the weeks that are before us. We can influence the people at home. That I know, but I want all the backing I can get and I should like to feel that you were here to help me. Send me a line please and tell me exactly what you feel on the matter.

The next thing I want to give you my inmost feelings is

'Gandhi'. I want peace and co-operation in this country. He can give this if he wishes. While I don't like his methods, he has secured a great advance for the depressed classes which is all to his credit. Why can't he give up his wretched Civil Disobedience campaign? So long as, through this agitation by his followers, the law is continually broken, so long as I have to adopt measures to secure liberty to the law-abiding citizen. If he gave up Civil Disobedience, he would be at liberty to carry on his great work for the depressed classes, but until he does, I can never trust him not to restart the whole trouble again.

It is a deplorable situation. Can nothing be done by those who know him best to get him to reconsider his position?

I am writing to you as a very old friend on whom I can absolutely rely. I am a Liberal. I want peace, but as an administrator, I can't permit Civil Disobedience which is a policy of breaking the law."

Sastri agreed to contact Gandhiji and wrote to him three letters but nothing came out of it. Gandhiji turned down Willingdon's and Sastri's suggestions.

Writing to Sastri on 14th November, Gandhiji says:

"I carefully read the typed notes you sent me. The reasoning failed to make any appeal to me."



## CHAPTER XXXII

### HOARE'S BREACH OF FAITH

#### THIRD R.T.C.

#### JINNAH IN LONDON

#### JINNAH RETURNS TO INDIA—JAN. 1934.

#### CONGRESS CALLS OFF C.D.: CONGRESS SESSION IN BOMBAY, 1934

EARLY in 1932, the Franchise Committee, the Federal Finance Committee, and the States Enquiry Committee came to India, and it was understood that the work so far accomplished by the two Round Table Conferences was to be continued by the British Government. But the British Government reversed this policy as shown in the House of Commons speech by Sir Samuel Hoare on 27th June.

The essential features of the new proposals were that:

There would be a single Bill which would provide for full provincial autonomy and for a federation of provinces and States; the British Government would proceed to give its decision on the Communal problem (This was done by the Award published on 17th August and which was later replaced by the Yeraoda Pact after Gandhiji's fast); the Consultative Committee would reassemble and continue its work in regard to important questions entrusted to it, many of which were not discussed by the R.T.C. and its Committees. Hoare further suggested that a Joint Select Committee of Parliament would be appointed after the consultative Committee had concluded its work and before the Bill was introduced. This was intended, Hoare claimed, to facilitate Indian co-operation and ensure its effective influence at the formative stage. If, however, it was found that the discussion in the Consultative Committee did not help Government to formulate definite proposals for the consideration of Joint Select Committee without further consultation, then arrangement would be made for the summon-

ing of a body for further discussions in London.

This statement evoked strong protest in India. Sapru, Jayakar and N. M. Joshi tendered their resignations from the Consultative Committee. Sapru in his letter of resignation said that the announcement struck him "as a vital departure from the method of the Round Table Conference which attracted so many Indians in 1929 when it was first announced by Lord Irwin." He wrote: "After prolonged consideration of all the issues involved I have come to the conclusion that the variation effected in procedure is not merely of form but of substance. My faith in the method hitherto pursued continues unaffected, but I have no such faith in the new procedure and I therefore feel I cannot any longer usefully serve on the Consultative Committee which has ceased to be the Working Committee of the Round Table Conference and is now an independent body whose work can no longer come up for final review before the Round Table Conference. I therefore feel it my duty to place my resignation from the Consultative Committee in your Excellency's hands."

Sapru's resignation was followed by a conference in Bombay on July 16 at which some of the Indian Members of the Round Table Conference from all over India were present and over which Sir Chimanlal Setalvad presided. The Conference issued the following statement, among the signatories being Sapru, Sastri, Setalvad, Jayakar, Chintamani and Rangaswami Aiyangar:

"The above mentioned members of the Round Table Conference having considered with care the announcement made by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons on June 27 and all the statements since made in explanation thereof, including Sir Samuel Hoare's statement on July 7, are constrained to come to the conclusion that the new procedure is entirely different, in substance and spirit, from the Conference method as expounded by Lord Irwin in October, 1929, and July, 1930, and by the Premier in December, 1931. They consider that the new procedure is symptomatic of a new policy and cannot produce, in that event, a constitution at all so satisfactory as that which the conference method was designed to produce. The result is bound to be a great aggravation of the evils of the pre-

sent situation. It is the considered and emphatic conclusion to the signatories that the maintenance of the conference method is, as it was, an essential condition of their co-operation and support."

This condemnation of the new British policy had the desired effect. On Sept. 5, Willingdon, addressing the opening session of the Legislative Assembly, announced that the Third Round Table Conference would be held at which a small body of representatives of the States and British India would meet His Majesty's Government in London about the middle of the next year.

The Third Round Table Conference met from 17th November to 24th December. The British Labour Party was not represented and the British Indian delegates were much fewer than at the 1st and 2nd Round Table Conference. Among those not invited were Sastri, Setalvad, Jinnah and Chintamani. The Conference discussed reports of different Committees. At all the three Conferences, the British Indian delegates were insisting upon responsibility at the Centre being inaugurated simultaneously with its establishment in the provinces. Sapru who was the most outstanding figure and leader of the Indian delegation once again made a great and gallant fight for federation and responsibility at the Centre. On 23rd December he said:

"If we wanted to get on with provincial autonomy the Simon Commission's Report gave us an opportunity. But we did not want provincial autonomy. Therefore from this point of view the question of the date of the Federation is to my mind of the most vital importance. With regard to that I wish to state the position of some of us as clearly as it is possible for me to do. Our position is that you must fix a date for the inauguration of the Federation as was done in the case of the Dominions of Canada, Australia and South Africa. But before you fix that date I hope you will also fix the date on which the Indian States must formally and authoritatively notify their willingness to come into the Federation. I suggest that the date should not be longer removed than twelve months from the date on which the Act is passed by Parliament. If I am confronted with the position that date may arrive and the Princes may not have made up their minds by that time to

come into the Federation or that things may not be in such complete order as to justify the inauguration of the Federation, then my answer to that is that the Federation must be made to function all the same, leaving it open to their Highnesses to come as and when they please. I am quite alive to the danger of fixing a date, but surely it should not be beyond British statesmanship to devise a formula to meet a contingency of that character. Therefore, I suggest that if you find that there are any valid reasons which may prevent you from giving effect to that proposal and bringing the Federation into operation on that particular date you should reserve to yourselves the power of extending that date, provided of course that extension is not too prolonged. Frankly I visualise the Federation coming into operation in working order in 1935 at the latest. I am not looking upon the Federation as a possibility or a probability in 1933 or 1940. That is my view with regard to it, but if you should find that this is impossible then speaking for myself-and I hope I am speaking for everyone on this side—I say that it would be a most dangerous thing for you to start the new constitution in the provinces and leave the centre unaltered. I say that because of constitutional and administrative grounds I hold that it would be impossible for the responsible provinces to work in harmony with an autocratic central government. Besides I suggest to you that the constitutions of the provinces have a direct relation to the new constitution which you are contemplating at the centre as it is at present moment. That was the vital condition which you imposed upon the responsibility in British India in 1930 and which you repeated in 1931”.

Sapru's conception of federation was that the States should be honoured partners while British India should not be treated as a dependency of the States. Turning to Defence, Sapru demands that the Indian legislature should be responsible for the maintenance and expansion of military education.

Sapru asked Hoare to make a definite pronouncement on this part of the R.T.C. work which would considerably help the reception of the constitution. It must be acceptable to the people of India. Unless he and his colleagues were able to convince the Congressites, the chances of making a wide appeal to the country were very limited. He added: “With all my differences with Congressmen I had, that as far as Mr. Gandhi

is concerned, he sums up in his personality the highest degree of self-respect in India and the highest degree of patriotism in the country. The present state of things in India could not be allowed to continue much longer without causing serious injury and prejudice to the work which they had been doing amidst so much of unpopularity. He did not wish the Congressmen to be treated as outlaws but to work the constitution. If we are to discuss these things with whom are we to discuss them? As far as Mr. Gandhi is concerned, he will simply refuse to discuss any political question inside the jail".

Sapru said: "If on the Government's own showing the situation had improved, were they improving the chances of constitutional methods and the chances of this constitution being accepted in India by keeping 15000 or 16000 men, who might be thoroughly wrong in the methods that they have adopted but who have nevertheless gone to jail because of their opinions and certain activities? I tell you that I have never known in my 30 years of experience as a public man so much of bitterness and so much of hostile feeling in Indian homes as I have witnessed during the last few months".

Hoare made a statement indicating the probable outline of the future constitution which was to be placed before Parliament. It was felt that a constitution merely tinkering with the real problem but making no satisfactory advance towards Dominion Status would not satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Indian people.

In March, 1933, the White Paper was issued by the British Government formulating their proposals for Indian Constitutional Reforms. Throughout India, the White Paper was found most inadequate and unsatisfactory. The Legislative Assembly's verdict was:

"Unless the proposals for constitutional reform are substantially amended in the direction of conceding greater responsibility and freedom of action to the people's representatives in the Central and provincial spheres of Government, it will not be possible to ensure peace and contentment and progress of the country."

The best criticism from the Indian point of view was given by the British Labour Party in the statement made by Major Attlee in the House of Commons:—



"Since the commencement of the British control of India in 1857, successive British Governments have given pledges to the people of that country.

The Labour Party desire to see the pledges carried out. They stand by the declaration made at the Blackpool Conference of 1927 the effect of which was to reaffirm the right of the Indian people to full self-government and self-determination.

Therefore the policy of the British Government should be one of continuous co-operation with the Indian people with the object of establishing India as early as possible by her own consent as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth. The Labour Party believe that as stated by the Simon Commission, the new constitution should contain within itself provisions for its own development. We think that the new constitution should contain the principle laid down in the Irwin-Gandhi Pact that such safeguards as are necessary should be in the interests of India and think that they should be agreed to in co-operation with the leaders of Indian opinion. The Indian Constitution should adopt the principle laid down by the Labour Government at the First Round Table Conference and repeated as their policy by the National Government at the Second Round Table Conference that the reserved powers should not be such as to prejudice the advance of India through the new constitution to full responsibility for her own government.

The Labourites stand by the principle that a settlement cannot be reached without the co-operation and consent of all sections of India. Therefore I ask for the release of political prisoners.

If a Joint Committee is set up the Party will nominate its representatives because it is our duty to serve such a body representing the two Houses and will do our utmost to get our views discussed and incorporated in the Committee Report."

Major Attlee emphasized the declaration made on behalf of Britain and said that the Labour Government's policy was co-operation, free discussion and agreement for which it went to great lengths and achieved a remarkable triumph when Congress representatives were present at the Round Table Conference and all Indian political opinion was called into co-operation.

A change followed under the National Government. The

Round Table Conference was discussed. An era of repression against the Congress was started and the whole structure of conciliation was shattered. The Third Round Table Conference contained a small number of handpicked unrepresentative delegates. It was a mistaken policy because it was impossible to smash the Congress by force and reach a satisfactory conclusion with a few Indian representatives. The whole Paper seemed directly to conflict with the principles laid down and our pledges. Sir S. Hoare's speech although it tried to hold the balance even, was actually directed at Mr. Churchill. Major Attlee said that in the White Paper the whole idea of Dominion Status had gone as also the idea of progressive advance towards self-government. There was no suggestion that the powers of the Governor-General and the Secretary of State would lapse.

There was no provision for a change in the Centre machinery or the lapsing of financial safeguards and for Indians controlling their own defence. The White Paper did not indicate that the safeguards were transitory.

Major Attlee complained also of the extremely vague time for the Central Constitution to come into force and said that never had he seen so many obstacles put in the way of reforms. The date of conditions for the inauguration of the Federation must be clarified. He proceeded to criticise the proposals on the grounds of introducing dyarchy at the Centre which would inevitably lead to blurring responsibility throughout. Dyarchy was a lesson in irresponsibility. It was a terrible thing to establish it at the Centre after it had already been so discredited in the Provinces. The only basis for an interim constitution was complete agreement with the politically-minded people with whom we would have to work. The Labourites demanded self-government on grounds of the economic and social conditions of the masses and wanted to free the forces of young India from social reform. The White Paper would not accomplish that. "There was no Central responsibility and no suggestion of progress towards full responsibility or relaxation of the control of the Commons and the Secretary of State. There was no approach to Dominion Status. The Government had sacrificed good-will and co-operation and sacrificed everything to timidity, over-fear and over-insistence on safeguards. In essentials which

called for Indian co-operation, the scheme failed."

Early in April, the personnel of the Joint Select Committee was announced. The British Labour Party was represented on it. Some Indian representatives—prominent among them Sapru, Jayakar, C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, Purshottamdas Thakurdas—were invited by the Committee to "confer" with the latter.

But once again Gandhiji, as he did in September, 1932, diverted the country's attention from politics to himself. He did this by going on a hunger-fast of twenty-one days, the ostensible reason being Harijan work. Actually the fast was for self-purification as a protest against and a penance for what he considered not a correct behaviour on the part of an American girl who was his disciple and was an inmate in his ashram, as it was for the Harijan cause.

Gandhiji in his statement said that he obeyed his 'inner voice' in going on this fast and said that the fast was particularly against himself. It was a heart-prayer for the purification of self and associates for greater vigilance and watchfulness. I want more workers of unassailable purity, shocking cases of impurity have come under my notice. Among other friends, General Smuts cabled to him to desist from this fast.

Government released Gandhiji in view of his impending fast. Gandhiji issued a statement that very evening advising the Acting President of the Congress to suspend for four to six weeks the civil disobedience movement. The Civil Disobedience movement had as good as collapsed. One can see from Gandhiji's statement that he was fully aware of this. Gandhiji advised Government to release all political prisoners. There was thus clearly a mixed motive in Gandhiji's fast, just not because of Harijan uplift or alleged misbehaviour of one of his disciples. Aney immediately suspended the civil disobedience movement for six weeks.

Gandhiji commenced his fast on May 9th and broke it on May 29th.

Three days earlier—26th May—I sailed from Bombay for a three month trip to Europe. Among the places I visited were Venice, Naples, Milan, London, Edinburgh, the English Lakes, Shakespeare's birthplace, Oxford, Paris, Berlin, Prague, Vienna and Innsbruck.

I stayed in London for about eighteen days. I met fre-

quently Sapru, Jayakar, Purshottamdas Thakurdas, C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar and B. Rama Rau who were there in connection with their work of the Joint Select Committee.

After the deliberations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee were over, the British Indian Delegation headed by the Aga Khan presented a joint memorandum insisting that certain proposals contained therein should be incorporated in the legislation to be introduced in Parliament. These proposals were of a modest character but not a single one was accepted, by the Joint Parliamentary Committee.

The demand made by the Indian delegates that the preamble of the Act should contain the statement that the goal of political evolution of India was Dominion Status was also not accepted.

On several occasions, I met Jinnah who had not returned to India after the end of the Second Round Table Conference in December 1931. He had settled down in England and had bought a house in Hampstead Heath. He started his legal practice in London and took his Chambers in the King's Bench Walk. Because, he was thus out of Indian politics, the British Government did not think it necessary to invite him to the Third Round Table Conference in November-December 1932 and to help in the work of the Joint Select Committee from May, 1933 onwards.

In a speech he gave in Aligarh five years later in 1938, Jinnah gave an explanation for his self-imposed exile in England:

"I received the shock of my life at the meetings of the Round Table Conference. In the face of danger, the Hindu sentiment, the Hindu mind, the Hindu attitude led me to the conclusion that there was no hope of unity. I felt very pessimistic about my country. The position was most unfortunate. The Mussalmans were like dwellers in No Man's Land: they were led by either the flunkeys of the British Government or the camp-followers of the Congress. Whenever attempts were made to organize the Muslims, toadies and flunkeys on the one hand, and traitors in the Congress camp on the other, frustrated the efforts. I began to feel that neither could I help India, nor change the Hindu mentality; nor could I make the Mussalmans rea-

lize the precarious position. I felt so disappointed and so depressed that I decided to settle down in London. Not that I did not love India, but I felt so utterly helpless."

I found Jinnah absolutely ignorant of what was happening in India during his absence of eighteen months and of what was happening in London in the Joint Select Committee. He told me that he did not go to meet any of the Indian leaders nor did any one of them care to come and see him. He, therefore, knew nothing about the progress or otherwise of the proposed constitution. But he was most keen on knowing what was happening and what was likely to happen. He asked me most searching questions. I could see that he had not lost his interest in and love for India.

One afternoon after my lunch with him he took me to his Chambers. He, the mighty Jinnah, the great leader, the Maker of Pakistan, boiled hot water on his electric kettle and made tea for me! That afternoon I was with him for about five hours.

I do not think that even though he was yearning to return to India, he had yet made any plans to do so. He must have felt that his coming back was no good unless he could recover his lost position and resume his political leadership. This opportunity he soon got when Liaquat Ali, later his great friend and colleague and afterwards the First Prime Minister of Pakistan when Jinnah became the Governor-General met him in London a few days after I had flown to the Continent.

Jinnah had first met Liaquat in 1928 in Calcutta at the Muslim League Session after the All-Parties Conference. Liaquat had supported Jinnah then and became his loyal friend and ally.

Liaquat told Jinnah that the time was ripe for Jinnah to return to India. Liaquat said that the Muslims needed a leader who was unpurchasable. Liaquat and Mrs. Liaquat begged of Jinnah to return to India and take over the leadership of the Muslim League. Jinnah allowed himself to be persuaded by them.

In December 1933, I received the following letter from Jinnah:

"Dear Kanji,

"Thank you so much for your letter of 27th November.

"I am leaving on the 22nd December, 1933 from Marseilles by s.s. "Maloja" and hope to reach Bombay on the 4th January, 1934, and am looking forward to meet all our friends again after such a long time.

"With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

M. A. Jinnah".

In London, I was in constant touch with David Graham Pole who was continuing his great work for India. I also met my old friend from Bombay, Sir Ernest Hotson. He was in the late Twenties the Home Member in Bombay and some time Acting Governor. When he was Acting Governor, he attended a social function at the Fergusson College, Poona, was shot at by a student and miraculously escaped unhurt. I came into close contact with Hotson in the work in connection with the Children's Aid Society of which he and I, among others, were founder-Members in 1927. I asked him in London what he thought was the solution to the communal (Hindu-Muslim) problem in India.

His answer was: "The next generation". He explained: "the younger people in India—boys and girls—Mohamedan and Hindu—were being educated together and had no communal or caste prejudices and when they would grow in manhood and womanhood they would wonder why we, their fathers and forefathers, were stupid enough and mad enough to indulge in communal and caste prejudices, squabbles and hatreds and why because of that we kept Swaraj away from the country and let the British divide us and rule. Within one generation, the communal problem would die". This talk took place over thirty two years ago. Two generations have passed since then. The communal and caste problems have worsened and are getting worse yet and the end is nowhere in sight. In 1933 it did look as if the communal problem would be solved within a generation as Hotson had said. It was not a too optimistic picture of the communal problem as it existed in the early Thirties. Both Jinnah and I believed that this was possible. The Congress, more than the Muslim League, is responsible that this dream of Hotson, Jinnah and myself was not realised.

One evening in March, 1934, Jinnah rang me up and asked me to see him at 10-30 next morning in his High Court Cham-

ber. I went at the appointed time but Jinnah did not turn up. This was quite unlike him as he was always in the High Court punctually at 10-30. I rang up his house and his bearer told me that Jinnah had taken seriously ill late the night before. For five days he was unconscious and hovered between life and death—it was just touch and go, as the attack he had was likely to affect the heart. On the very day that he regained consciousness, I called at his house. He saw me immediately and kept on talking to me for over half an hour, much to the dislike of his medical attendants.

I returned to India early in August, 1933. Gandhiji had courted arrest, was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and was lodged in Yeraoda Jail. As he was not satisfied with the facilities afforded to him by Government for doing Harijan work, he undertook a fast. Thereupon Government released him. Gandhiji felt that he would not be justified in taking to political work till the full term of his imprisonment was over. This meant the complete abandonment of mass civil disobedience. The political situation for the rest of the year was quiet, except for certain terrorist activities in Bihar and Bengal. The Civil Disobedience was not called off but was dormant and futile discussions went on among the Congress leaders about mass civil disobedience *versus* individual civil disobedience. The Congress leaders were tired and the people were demoralized. Slowly and silently, the movement faded away.

Writing to Lord Halifax on 23rd April, 1934, Birla said:

"The present position is most unhappy and intolerable. Not only is there more bitterness and greater lack of faith in British pledges than was ever before manifested; but what is worse is that the only method of peace, that is, the way of mutual understanding and human contact, is thrown overboard once for all". Birla continues: "He (Gandhi) has also now withdrawn the Civil Disobedience movement, earning the displeasure of the Left Wing of the Congress".

On August 27, 1933, Sastri wrote a most significant letter to Gandhiji. As was usual with Sastri, his language is mild, flowery and persuasive but the meaning is clear which can be expressed in these words—"Quit the Congress" he tells Gandhi. Parts of the letter must be quoted:

"It might be said by an observer who wasn't prejudiced

against Government that, while Harijan uplift was dear to you, putting blame on Government was dearer..... It has been said in my hearing by well-disposed persons that you would love nothing so much as to die in gaol and leave Government burdened with the responsibility. Behind and beyond your present tussle with Government lies the future of the country. How can Congress best secure that future? Your answer is clear. But another answer is taking shape in people's minds. It is that Civil Disobedience, both mass and individual, must be given up. A new policy, aiming at constructive national good in legislation, finance and administration all round has long been overdue and must be tried, over and above what is now called the constructive programme of the Congress. I believe this feeling is common outside Congress, and is gaining ground inside Congress. How can this orientation be brought about?

It is so different from your present policy, in look so opposed to it, that one doubts whether you can undertake it.

In this sore strait, the country looks to you to play a greater part than you have ever played. Save your individual conscience, pursue civil disobedience, seek gaol and embarrass Government as you like—but leave Congress free to evolve a new programme. The moment is come—in my opinion it came long ago—for you to say “I set Congress free to try other methods. I have plenty of God's work to do, for the nation's welfare, with Harijans”.

Gandhiji replied on 30th August:

“I quite agree with you that I am wholly unfit for the constitution building at the present stage. I would gladly retire from the Congress and devote myself to the development of civil disobedience outside the Congress and to Harijan work. The difficulty is how to do it? Can I do it by seceding from the Congress?”

That Gandhiji had started thinking on lines of what Sastri advised him and worrying about it can be seen from his letter to Vallabhbhai a year later (19th Aug. 1934):

“I cannot leave the Congress all at once. But I share my agony with you. How can I go until all of you allow me to go? But I do feel that is the only course open to me. I seem to be retarding the progress of the Congress. To hold on to an instrument in which one has no faith and



to prevent it being used by those who have faith—that is a pathetic and dangerous situation to boot. Is it not our duty to pull the Congress out of it? It does not matter as long as one can think of a remedy for corruption, but what else can one do when he finds that the only thing possible is to walk out? When I leave Congress, there will be an end of the hypocrisy in it. Truth and untruth, violence and non-violence, Khadi and calico or mulls—all things will pass.

“Jawaharlal’s explosion is not so dangerous as it sounds. He only exercised his right to let off steam. I believe he is now quiet.”

In between this period, Gandhiji had realised that able Congress leaders had no faith in his constructive programme and were yearning to get inside the Councils when there was no mass movement outside. So he himself moved at the A.I.C.C. meeting in Patna in May, 1934 the resolution favouring council entry, which he had opposed after he was released from jail in 1924. Civil disobedience was finally given up on May 20, 1934.

On June 6, the Government of India, realising that civil disobedience had been formally discontinued, withdrew notifications declaring the constituent parts of the Congress organisation illegal.

Jawaharlal was unhappy at the thought of the Congress going back to Councils. He wrote to Gandhiji of his “spiritual isolation” and complained of the toning down of Congress ideals.

In view of the opposition to his council entry resolution and his insistence on constructive programme the principal item of which was hand-spinning, Gandhiji was convinced that some of his followers had tired of his methods and views. He, therefore, felt that he owed it to himself and to his followers not to strain their loyalty unduly.

Gandhiji was further hurt that inspite of fifteen years of preaching and practising non-violence, his followers did not understand it.

Gandhiji, therefore, made up his mind to quit the Congress in October, 1934 but postponed announcing his decision till after the Congress Session later in the month. He wrote to Vallabhbhai: “I do not leave the Congress in anger or in huff nor yet in disappointment”. He did not take to active politics right till 1937. All the same he controlled its policy, being more

or less in and out of politics.

The 1934 Bombay Congress endorsed the Working Committee and A.I.C.C. resolution to form a Parliamentary Board for the purpose of sending Congress representatives to the Legislatures. Further it resolved to form the All-India Village Industries' Association under the leadership of Gandhiji as part of the activities of the Congress. Gandhiji also got the Congress to adopt a new Constitution.

The new Constitution as adopted declared the object of the Indian National Congress to be the attainment of Poorna Swaraj (complete Independence) by all legitimate and peaceful means. The qualification for membership was that the member should be a habitual wearer wholly of hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar and should do manual labour equal in value to 500 yds. per month of well-spun yarn of over ten counts. It will be seen that Gandhiji was thus diverting the Congress from political work to a hand-spinning and hand-weaving association. Gandhiji after having obtained a vote of confidence for himself announced his decision to quit the Congress.

Gandhiji's action in giving up a strong political movement infuriated the extremists, among whom could be included Jawaharlal and the Congress Socialists. The emergence of the Socialist left wing became apparent at the Bombay Session. The Communist Party of India, declared illegal by the Government, asked its members to infiltrate into the Congress Socialist Party, the idea being to push its own Communist ideology and views under the guise of socialism. Nehru said: "I do think that the basic ideology of Communism and its scientific interpretation of history is sound."

Later at the Congress Session in Lucknow in April, 1936, Nehru proclaimed his adherence to Communism. Communism received through the Congress President a respectable place inside the Congress.

Nehru, however, did not go whole-hog into the leftist Congress Social Camp because of his personal loyalty to Gandhiji from whose views he fundamentally differed.

The official history of the Congress says:

"Jawaharlal came to India full of Communistic and Marxian ideas. The achievements of the Congress disappointed him. He found himself as one against the

world."

It is pertinent to state here that during the late Twenties and early Thirties more steady and practical views of Vallabhbhai Patel and the impetuous and irresponsible extremist views of Jawaharlal Nehru became apparent and their names were identified with Right and Left Wing of the Congress. And this conflict continued till the passing away of Vallabhbhai in December, 1950. Like the jealous head of a big business executive, Gandhiji alternately not only supported one or the other and thus kept his hold on both Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai but also the whole Congress Organisation. Right from the Thirties till the attainment of independence in 1947, Nehru was in a minority and Vallabhbhai had the Congress machine in his powerful hands and ruled the Congress; Jawaharlal could only fret and frown and send desperate appeals to Gandhiji. The correspondence between Vallabhbhai and Gandhiji shows that Gandhiji was backing Vallabhbhai against Jawaharlal most of the time.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### DR. BESANT PASSES AWAY

#### TRIBUTES

IN 1929—she was 82 on October 1st—Mrs. Besant's health started giving way. All the same, she continued her great work. On April 18th, she arrived in Bombay and gave a lecture under the auspices of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee on the Nehru Report. She criticised the Viceroy for issuing the Ordinance on the Public Safety Bill which was thrown out by the Legislative Assembly. She said: "One does not feel hopeful of any good results now that H. E. the Viceroy has established the Public "Safety Bill", which places good citizens in danger as to their liberty and property. Still, nothing can prevent the advent of India's liberty".

She left for England immediately afterwards. She was in Budapest on May 16th from where she wrote: "All has gone well so far. The Government is very friendly because of my protest against the injustice with which Hungary has been treated in the treaty of Trianon. I am well, very well, I am glad to say, and my voice is in very good order". From Budapest, she went to London by air. From London she wrote: "I am hoping to meet many members at the World Congress in Chicago (August 24 to 29). I go to the Camp at Ommen (Holland). Evidently my Karma just now is in wide journeyings, but it is very delightful to meet, wherever I go, faithful and devoted members of our beloved Society, "the corner-stone of the future religions of the world."

On June 5th, my great friend, P. K. Telang, passed away in Lonavla. I have dedicated this book to the memory of C. Jinarajadas and P. K. Telang. Writing on 6th June, Mrs. Besant pays this tribute to him:

"Yesterday night—Wednesday, June 5th, one of my

dearly loved and wholly trustworthy sons, passed into the Peace, after long suffering and patient endurance. Pandharinath Telang was one of my colleagues in the Central High School and College, Benares, now the Hindu University. For long years we have worked together in the Theosophical Society and in the Home Rule League for the beloved Motherland. Never a jar occurred in our relationship, never a moment of alienation. He has passed—by many years my junior—ahead of me into the Light Eternal; that is the tragedy of prolonged age on earth”.

On June 29th, a Commonwealth of India Conference was held at Caxton Hall, where Mrs. Besant was the principal speaker. She has noted that her meetings on Theosophical subjects in Hungary, England and Scotland had been well attended. She also visited Ireland and lectured in Belfast, and Dublin. In Scotland, she went to Edinburgh and Perth.

The World Congress at Chicago was inaugurated on August 26th. The Presidential address was given by Dr. Besant.

On her birthday on 1st October, she sent the following birthday message to her friends all over the world:

“If every one of us will work, strenuously and continuously, until each has purged his own heart of every trace of resentment against every person, who has, he thinks, injured him, we shall then find, perhaps to our surprise, that Peace is reigning over the whole world.”

On 1st October, she was 82. She observed:

“During those years I have obeyed the instructions given to me by my Guru in my political (as in all other) actions in India and England. Lord Haldane generously spoke of me as a great statesman, and Mr. Geoffrey West has stressed my foresight in political matters. I can tell, looking back, that such foresight does seem remarkable on the surface. But it is not foresight; it is due to my prompt and implicit obedience to the orders of my Guru”.

She was back in India before the end of October. She wrote to me from Adyar on 27th October:

“I reach Bombay by the Madras Mail on November 1 and leave again for Delhi at 13-00. Can you put up Shiva Rao and myself for the few hours? Please wire if you can.” Jinnah came to see her and had a long pleasant talk with

her. Mrs. Besant, as was her wont, was squatting on the carpet but I had arranged for Jinnah to sit on a chair. But Jinnah discarded the chair and squatted down on the carpet.

The Viceroy's announcement about the Round Table Conference and the promise of Dominion Status was welcomed by the All-India leaders in a joint statement and Mrs. Besant was one of the signatories along with Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, Srinivas Sastri, Dr. Ansari and Jawaharlal Nehru.

I met Mrs. Besant again in Adyar in December, 1929. She took me to the private meeting at C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar's residence, where Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru gave a detailed account of the failure of the Conference between the Viceroy on the one hand, and Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, Sapru, Jinnah and Vithalbhai Patel on the other.

On 11th May, 1930, accompanied by Jinarajadas, she left for London—her last trip abroad—via Colombo.

On 5th June, she visited the House of Commons to address Members of both Houses of Parliament on the present political position of India. She spoke for over an hour in the largest Committee Room of the House of Commons.

She had a busy time giving lectures in England and at Ommen (Holland).

She was disappointed that Lord Irwin did not invite her to the Round Table Conference. Lord Irwin later explained to Lady Emily Lutyens that he had included Dr. Besant's name as the fourth on the list of leaders of India to be invited but some of her own friends had asked him to drop her name because they were afraid she would ask for the whole pound of flesh for India and would not whittle down her demands to make a compromise settlement. She was back in Bombay on October 17th. Old age and illness, had by this time, completely overtaken her; and though she lived quietly for three more years in Adyar—except for her short visit to Benares in December 1930—her work on the physical plane had come to an end. She had worn herself out completely by hard and continuous work. And even in 1929 and 1930, she travelled all over Europe and the United States of America.

It was my good fortune to meet her again in Adyar in December, 1931 and in January 1933. Jinarajadas very kindly arranged for my stay there in rooms next to hers. On Decem-

ber 15th, 1931, afternoon, I had tea with her on the verandah outside her rooms and among others who were there, were Leadbeater, Mr. and Mrs. Jinarajadas, Warrington and George Arundale. As she walked from Leadbeater's room back to the verandah, she leaned heavily on my arms. She was so very feeble. She stopped for a second and asked me if she could lean on my arms. I answered promptly: "Yes". Again she asked: "Can I really lean on your arms?" And I answered: "Yes, yes, of course. Do please". She smiled and said: "Thank you." As I was taking leave of her, I told her that that evening I was going to a nursing home in Madras for a major operation the next day. She gave me her best wishes and blessings. Ten days later, I returned to Adyar for recuperation after a successful operation. A week later, early in January, I went to say good-bye to her as I was returning to Bombay that night. By that time, the Government had arrested Gandhiji, Vallabhbhai and hundreds of Congress leaders and followers all over the country because of the Working Committee's Resolution to start Civil Disobedience. She told me: "Don't go. Stay on here, I want you". I told her: "I have to go but I will come again". She then gave me leave to go and blessed me.

I was able to keep this promise and went to Adyar early in January, 1933, on my way to Travancore. Once again she was happy to see me in Adyar for a few days. When I bade farewell to her on 8th January, this was the last time I met her in this incarnation.

From then on, she was very ill and finally on September 20, 1933, at 4.00 in the afternoon, she passed away just ten days before she would have completed 86 years. She was cremated a few hours later.

From 1918 till her passing away, I worked in the closest contact with her. Never for a moment did I waver in my loyalty to her. She was my great friend, teacher, leader and above all mother and I enjoyed her fullest confidence. Never did I give her occasion to feel dissatisfied with my devotion and service. She appreciated and accepted my work and she knew I was always doing my best though I was fully conscious of the fact that my work was imperfect. She was the kindest and the most generous and most tolerant friend and leader. Her philosophy of life is embodied in the following eight lines written by her

and she fully practised this philosophy:

"If a comrade be faithless,  
let us be faithful to him;  
if an enemy injure,  
let us forgive him;  
if a friend betray,  
let us stand by him;  
then shall the hidden god  
in us shine forth.

She was the kindest and most understanding person I have met in life.

Tributes from all over the world poured in, and I can only reproduce some of these tributes spread over the years which I think require special mention.

First and foremost must come the beautiful broadcast talk of Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, on the occasion of the birth centenary of Mrs. Besant:

"All over the world, all that is left of the civilized world is united in celebrating the birth centenary of one who was born far, far away from India, a small laughing child, a child like any other child, shedding the same tears, laughing the same laughter, dancing in the sunlight. And who could have foretold a hundred years ago that this child would grow to be one of the immortal figures of history. The whole world knows the early history of Annie Besant. When in her very youth, she showed some signs of that militant spirit that made her one of the greatest rebels in the world. But it was not till she had passed through a long apprenticeship in England, till she had waged her earliest wars against injustice, till in the comradeship of great reformers she had preached the gospel of emancipation for humanity, that she came to India. I was 15 years old, a dreaming child. And when this woman, in the splendour of her middle age, came to India, she burst upon an astonished nation like a figure of some goddess come to life. She was not beautiful in the ordinary sense; she was majestic and I, who have seen many queens in my life, have never seen one so regal, one whose prestige had such an immediate and lasting effect. She came as a pilgrim to seek the ways of wisdom which she thought the Indian people could teach her. But when she found that India had disinherited herself from her old heritage,



when she found that the sons and daughters of this old land were ignorant of their own culture, their own great philosophy, their own enlightenment, she became herself a teacher.

And it is as a teacher that I knew her. Her oratory was incomparable, the gestures of her hand when she spoke, the radiance of her eyes when she turned round to face her audience! Every fibre of her being was an ecstasy of dedication to the cause of India. Her earliest work was for education—the very fundamental of civilization. In the very city where she first started her work on the banks of the Ganges lies her most enduring monument. Her educational work cannot be appraised as yet. Her work of social reform and her fight against every form of injustice is yet to find a historian with a true perspective to appraise it. But she is best known to India, as she is to the world today, best remembered by the great political work. It is so strange that a European woman should have come in our midst and taught us the degradation of our bondage. It was so inspiring and so exalting to our spirit to find this woman, foreign by birth and more Indian truly than all of us, who taught us that freedom was our birthright and that no sacrifice was too great to attain this freedom. Through the length and breadth of the country she flew on the wings of inspiration and she stirred the dead hearts of our people, rekindling them to life.

Today when our freedom is new to us, when we have not yet got accustomed to the flag of freedom challenging the winds of heaven, and the rising sun, our thoughts go back in gratitude to this great and glorious person who was a leader, among the foremost of those who wrought for freedom. I saw her mellow as the years went by, from being an imperious queen with prestige and authority, to becoming an old woman with bent shoulders, white hair, and failing memory, but greater than in the heyday of her life, more magnificent in her bowed shoulders than in the high noon-tide of her womanhood. She became not the queen but the sybil, the priestess, the prophetess. She died because the old must die, she died because she had outlived the normal span of human life. But her work endures. Wherever hearts are uplifted in gratitude for the freedom of this country, men and women must for ever honour her name. She was among that small great band of visionaries, warriors, prophets, who foresaw and foretold the day of freedom and it

was she who inspired the hearts of Indians to go forward and fight not counting the cost.

On the hundredth anniversary of her birth, let us rejoice that it was our privilege to have lived in the radiant shadow of her being. Let us remember the golden words that flowed like a regenerating river from her golden voice to inspire and rekindle our hearts. Let us remember this woman who was not merely a human woman, but the embodiment of all the power, of all the passion, of all the ecstasy, and all the glory of womanhood whose mission is service. Her's was a family that comprised the entire census of humanity. She had no limitations of colour, creed or caste, and as she grew older and older her power got transmuted and mellowed and enriched by a surpassing love that was motherhood incarnate. To this woman's memory I pay my tribute, my homage not only as an Indian and a fellow-worker, but as one who from her earliest girlhood was inspired to work for the glory of her country and who learnt her first lessons in patriotism from the lips of this woman who was known as Annie Besant in life and as a great mother of the Indian people in her death."

Sapru paid a glorious tribute to Dr. Besant's services to India. He said that Dr. Besant was to a very large extent responsible for that burning passion for political freedom and political self-respect which was now characteristic of this country. He had not the least hesitation in saying that no Indian loved India more deeply and more sincerely and with greater passion or with more burning faith in India's destiny than Dr. Besant did since she adopted India as her motherland.

Under the caption, "Dr. Annie Besant Centenary", the Times of India wrote an editorial on the 1st October, 1947:

"Today is the centenary of the birth of one who made a lasting impression on India's public life. As author, pamphleteer and journalist, as politician, orator and organiser, as educationist, social reformer and spiritual leader, Dr. Annie Besant was a unique personality. Such was the variety of her interests and the versatility of her talent that many branches of human activity have been enriched by her contribution. She went from science to religion, from trade unionism to occultism, from scouting to demogogy; to every one of her undertakings her approach was at once scientific and essentially human. Born

a British subject, she eventually adopted India as her motherland and spent the last forty years of her life here. Although her youthful years in Britain were marked by many public activities, such as the fight for the liberty of the press and of conscience and the working class struggle for better living—she was one of the founders of the British Labour Party and one of the earliest members of the Fabian Society, where she worked in association with Bradlaugh, the Sydney-Webbs and Bernard Shaw—her title to international fame and Indian gratitude lies in her crowded life in this country.

It is the penalty of politics that today's hero is tomorrow's back number; she was forgotten when the Gandhian era was firmly established. The last years of Dr. Besant's life were spent in comparative isolation, although as the elective head of the theosophical organisation for an unbroken period of 25 years till her death she inspired the actions and even thoughts of many eminent Indians. A grateful country will today cherish the memory of a British woman who dedicated her life to India and served her adopted country in countless directions, leaving a rich and colourful heritage."

On 6th August, 1956, I wrote to Prime Minister Nehru the following letter after he returned from London where he unveiled Lokmanya Tilak's portrait on the occasion of Lokmanya Tilak's birth centenary:

"I enclose my article on Lokmanya Tilak, which appeared in the 'Times of India' of 23rd July.

My purpose in sending this article to you is to draw your attention to the work done by Dr. Besant in creating the atmosphere for demanding Home Rule for India long before Gandhiji appeared on the Indian political horizon. Lord Sinha presided at the Bombay Congress in December 1915. The British Government with Austen Chamberlain as the Secretary of State for India were considering a scheme of reforms for India. When Austen Chamberlain read Lord Sinha's Presidential Address, he gave up all idea of pushing forward this scheme and said: "India can wait". This was the reaction produced on him by the mildness of Lord Sinha's address. Sir Phirozshah Mehta opposed Mrs. Besant's efforts to get Tilak in the Congress, but it was her perseverance that succeeded and Tilak attended the Lucknow Congress. But for Mrs. Besant it would not have

been possible for Tilak to come to Congress. In many ways the Lucknow Congress changed the whole atmosphere of moderatism and the Congress became "extremist" with Tilak and Besant as leaders. This was the first Congress which I attended as a delegate.

I was disappointed at your speech in London unveiling Lokmanya's portrait; you made no reference to Dr. Besant's work in connection with the Freedom Movement. It is true that Dr. Besant opposed Gandhiji's civil disobedience and non-co-operation movement; so did Tilak, who died 50 days before the non-co-operation resolution was passed at the special session of the Calcutta Congress late in September, 1920. I remember that Jinnah, Umar, Shankerlal, Jamnadas, Jayakar and myself arrived at Howrah station by a special train. Pandit Motilal came to meet Jinnah and told him in my presence using rather strong language "Let us save the country from Gandhi. He wants us to boycott the new legislatures under the Montague Act, but we should not allow him to do so." Unfortunately the N.C.O. Resolution was passed, C. R. Das and Dr. Besant opposing it. Pandit Motilal Nehru, however, voted with the resolution, because of his respect and affection for Gandhiji. The events of the last nine years, including your work as Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, prove that Dr. Besant was right in opposing Gandhiji's non-co-operation and civil disobedience movement. What I am saying here now in this letter to you, I have said in my 85 page in the book on Gandhiji, which was published in May, 1950.

I myself think and many others agree with me that if we had followed the Besant way in politics, we would have gained Swaraj by 1930 or 1931 and without partition. But it is fruitless to discuss the might-have-beens of history and to argue whether Dr. Besant was right or Gandhiji was right. All the same whether you agree with Dr Besant or not, you cannot forget the great work she did in politics as well as in social reform, educational and religious movements. Mrs. Besant also with an international reputation put India on the map of the world and President Wilson wrote to Prime Minister Lloyd George in regard to her internment in June, 1917. This was the beginning of United States' interest in India's Independence, taken up once again by President Roosevelt. I feel strongly on

this subject. India may have many faults but I hope and believe that ingratitude is not one of them.

I am sure, you will not mind this personal letter, as you will understand and appreciate the friendly spirit with which I have written. Though, I think, you disagreed with Dr. Besant and many aspects of the Theosophical Society—and with many theosophists, you would certainly acknowledge the spade work which Dr. Besant did in regard to India's Fight for Freedom."

I did not expect that the Prime Minister so soon after his return would have either the time or inclination to reply to this critical letter. But he replied immediately—7th August—the very day that he received my letter.

He wrote :

"Thank you for your letter of August 6th. When I unveiled Lokmanya Tilak's portrait in London, I was not dealing with the freedom movement as a whole. I spoke for barely five or six minutes. There is no question of my forgetting Mrs. Besant's great part in India's struggle for freedom."

It was my happy experience that Nehru generally always replied to my letters within 48 hours of receiving them. His last letter to me was written on 28th September, 1963, in reply to mine of 27th September. His replies were short, to the point and not evasive. He answered frankly, he did not mind criticism.

There are two other equally good correspondents, Lord Attlee and C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar. They always reply promptly. They are both now octogenarians. Attlee types his own letters but sometimes writes by his own hand.

The latest verdict on Mrs. Besant's life and work is given by Dr. Arthur Nethercot in his comprehensive study published in two volumes in 1960 and 1963. His final analysis of Dr. Besant's work must be quoted :

"It is now pertinent to ask what would have been the difference to the world if Annie Besant had never lived. For one thing, the acceptance of women in English Colleges would have been established some what later. For another, the acceptance of birth control as a respectable practice would also have been delayed. The campaign for granting women equal rights with men would have lost a valuable supporter. Her absence from the London School Board would have delayed the

achievement of free public education for children of both sexes, and the principle of furnishing free meals at public expense to children whose parents could not afford them would have been postponed. The early Fabian Society would have impressed itself much more slowly on the public mind if the lustre of her name and fame as an orator in its cause had been lacking. As a female strike-leader and social reformer her services would have been greatly missed.

Without her spectacular conversion from atheism and materialism to mysticism the anti-rationalistic movement toward the end of the nineteenth century would have lost a powerful force. The oriental surge would also have been weakened. As to the validity of her extravagant and dogmatic claims concerning the world of the occult, one can express a complete but polite scepticism without impugning the sincerity of her own belief. The nature of the mystical experience is *ipso facto* an utterly personal one. The experiences of very few mystics have agreed with the experiences of other mystics, and the worlds they have found themselves inhabiting when "out of this body" would suggest that there must be thousands of such private worlds, each waiting for some highly sensitive, yearning, and imaginative individual to take possession of it. Who can say that the visions of Annie Besant and her encounters with the Masters, the Rishis, and the Devas, not to mention the Logos Himself, were any less real and credible than the voices of Joan of Arc or the visions of Bernadette Soubirous? There was after all, much of the Joan of Arc in Annie Besant, except that Annie always saw herself as a martyr, whereas Joan was made one by posterity.

It was only after her death that Joan succeeded in her self-appointed, or heaven-dictated mission. The same was true of Annie Besant's great crusade. But if India had followed the advice of her and her party in 1919 the country would probably have obtained Dominion Status seventeen or so years earlier than it did, it would probably have retained Pakistan and there would have been no Kashmir problem. For in 1929 Jinnah and the Muslim League had not yet grown strong enough to demand partition—or to have thought of it. The holocaust of the transition from British Colony to self-governing Commonwealth, due to the intensifying exacerbation of the Hindu-Muslim into-

lerance, would perhaps never have happened. For these things, the responsibility must be assumed by the extreme independence party. The greatest share must perhaps go to Jawaharlal Nehru, through his influence on Gandhiji and Motilal Nehru in the twenties, Gandhiji being essentially the instrument by which the younger Nehru achieved his ends.

Gandhiji appealed to the imagination of the world as the little, scrawny, half-starved, self-denying man in a breach-clout—a wizened little monkey defying the terrible British lion—a sort of incarnation of Hanuman, the monkey-god, as I heard one intellectual, non-Congress Indian describe him. This Gandhi has been apotheosised by the millions of the Indian masses today. His very irrationality, his mystical defiance of the principles of common sense, his persistence in spite of his “Himalayan blunders”, the frequent success of his fantastic, almost crack-brained schemes, endeared him to both the masses and the extremist intellectuals.

Annie Besant too was a mystic, drawing inspiration from within herself—an inspiration which she personified in the voices of her Rishis and Masters. But she had a hard bed rock of common sense in spite of her occultism. Her own reiterated references to Geoffrey West’s praise of her political “foresight” and acumen, as well as to Lansbury’s and Lord Haldane’s similar certifications show how much weight she attached to this quality. Her deeply ingrained loyalty to Britain controlled her long-standing sympathy with India and Indian troubles. Compromise, therefore, resulted within her. A compromise for which most Indians and most Englishmen could not forgive her. But it was a sort of hard-headed compromise that might have saved India from years of “passive” riot, arson, and bloodshed, and from the horrors of “Communal” civil war between Pakistan Musleems and Indian Hindus.

The application of Gandhiji’s patented discoveries of the hunger strike and of satyagrah has now taken place in reverse against Nehru and his free and “independent” government. The recent linguistic strife in the Punjab, conducted on these principles, has proved as irrationally violent and deep-seated as racial school integration in the American South. In fact, in 1961 the now wiser Nehru admitted to the American Editor, Norman Cousins: “To tell you the truth, I didn’t approve of fasting as

a political weapon when Gandhi practised it..... But we in India came to accept many things about Gandhi we didn't fully understand..... Here today in India..... fasting has become quite common..... Either way whether for serious ends or petty ends—I don't like it. I have made it clear that the government will not be influenced by hunger strikes". And in answer to a question as to how he reconciled his use of force in the initial Kashmir situation with Gandhiji's idea of non-violence, he admitted: "I was greatly troubled in mind and spirit because I knew that we have to face a war so soon after achieving our independence through a philosophy of non-violence..... Yet I acted. Gandhi said nothing to indicate his disapproval. It was a great relief, I must say. This strengthened my belief that Gandhi could be adaptable."

When the shoe is on the other foot and pinches, and the wearer has double-knotted the shoe-lace, he cannot easily take it off, as the now older and strangely undecisive Nehru and his party have discovered. Annie Besant knew how to wear sandals in India and shoes in the rest of the world."

What would be the verdict of history on Mrs. Besant's political work? India is too near the Gandhi & Nehru Age fully to appreciate Mrs. Besant's achievements; and it is not possible, therefore, to expect an impartial verdict from the Indian historian for a few years more to come. But I have not the slightest doubt that within twenty-five years, when myths are forgotten, the verdict of history would be that Mrs. Besant was right in opposing the non-co-operation and the civil disobedience movement and that, if her advice would have been followed, in the early twenties, India would have been a responsible self-governing Dominion, a partner in the British Commonwealth, by 1932 or 1933. This implies strong criticism of Gandhiji. By pursuing his negative and destructive movements, he delayed the advent of Swaraj by about 15 years and that when India became free and independent in 1947, it was at the cost of the division of the country into Pakistan and India.

In this book I have in all humility attempted to help the future historian to pass his judgment on the events of India from 1913 onwards. All honour to Mrs. Besant that she did not mind losing her popularity over the night by having had the courage to oppose Gandhiji.



## **CHAPTER XXXIV**

### **JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE.**

#### **THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA BILL: ACT COMES INTO FORCE.**

#### **THE CONGRESS FIRST REFUSES AND THEN ACCEPTS OFFICE IN PROVINCES.**

Within three weeks of the publication of the White Paper, a Joint Select Committee of 32 comprising equal members from the Commons as well as the Lords was appointed with Lord Linlithgow as the Chairman. This Committee worked from April, 1933 right till November, 1934. Churchill took to obstruction at every stage and its work which should have been finished by the end of 1933 was not completed till about a year later—November, 1934. This further delayed the passage of the Government of India Bill which finally was passed in July, 1935. Samuel Hoare regrets this avoidable delay because, he says, that if the Bill had been finally passed by early 1934, it would perhaps have been possible for the Federation to come into being before the Second World War began in September, 1939. The fact of the matter, however, is that the Joint Select Committee Report satisfied no political party in India. In his letter dated 28th January, 1935, to Major David Graham Pole, Sivaswamy Aiyar says:

“Nothing has done so much to shake the confidence of the Indian public in the sincerity of the Government’s desire to advance constitutional development as the persistent refusal to make any reference to the goal of Dominion Status either in the body of the bill or in the preamble. Surely it ought to be possible for English draftsmen to frame a suitable formula for the preamble of the new act assuring India of equality of status with the self-governing dominions, even if the constitutional pandits shy at the use of the expression “Dominion Status” The commercial safeguards are devised in the interests of Britain

and not demonstrably in the interests of India. They will prevent us from reserving the coastal trade for Indian ships and they will interfere in many other ways with the development of Indian industries. We have, however, lost all hopes of any real improvement of the bill, such as would satisfy the Indian public”.

In a signed article on the subject, in the Indian Review (Dec. 1934), Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer complained:

“The Princes are not willing to make any surrender of their powers and privileges to the extent ordinarily necessary for the formation of a strong Central Government or to a division of powers and responsibilities between the federation and the constituent units on a uniform basis. As recognised by the Committee, it is most anomalous to have a federation composed of disparate constituent units in which the powers and authority of the Central Government would differ as between one constituent unit and another.”

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer continues:

“The tests by which the Committee’s scheme of reforms must be judged are the following:—

Does the scheme hold out any prospect of attaining Dominion Status even within a generation or a period of thirty years?

Does it hold out any prospect of the assumption by India of the responsibility for her own defence?

Does it provide India with the power and the means of utilising her slender financial resources for the development of her nation-building services?

Does it confer upon India sufficient freedom for the development of her industries and economic life to the fullest limit of her resources?

Does it tend to prolong or practically perpetuate the dictation of administrative policy by the Secretary of State and his control and interference in Indian administration?

It would require no little hardihood to assert that the scheme of constitutional reform recommended by the Joint Committee satisfies these tests.”

Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer concludes:

“The changes made by the Joint Committee in the White Paper scheme are generally of a retrograde character and are

intended to tighten the control of the Secretary of State over Indian administration. The scheme of the Joint Committee confers enormous powers, both legislative and administrative, upon the Governor and the Governor-General. In the administrative sphere, it confers upon them exclusive discretion, in certain matters, special responsibilities over a large sphere, inherent legal powers to act on their own responsibility and emergency powers. In the legislative sphere, they have a right to pass Acts and temporary Ordinances on their own responsibility."

It is necessary to recall to one's mind some reactions of Sir Samuel Hoare who has given a graphic account in his "Nine Troubled Years" of his work in connection with the Government of India Act of 1935. Referring to his evidence before the Joint Select Committee, he says:

"I submitted myself to a cross-examination by the thirty-two members of Parliament and the twenty-seven Indian Assessors that continued for 19 days, during which I answered 10,000 leading and supplementary questions. Whilst the questions and answers covered every known problem of Provincial Autonomy and All-India Federation, it is interesting to remember that no one either British or Indian raised the possibility of the division of India. The idea of Pakistan had not passed beyond the romantic mind of a Muslim Poet and the very name, Pakistan, was practically unknown." During the debate on the Bill fifteen and a half million words were spoken and they had filled 4,000 pages of Hansard, where no reference was made to the possibility of Pakistan.

Hoare frankly admitted that the extremists would never be able to get control of the Centre.

The Government of India Act of 1935 was retrograde and reactionary. It contained stringent provisions safeguarding British Commercial interests. The Indian Legislature was prohibited from passing any discriminatory legislation against British trading and shipping incorporated companies and firms operating in India.

Speaking at the Muslim League Sessions in Bombay in April, 1936, Jinnah, the permanent President of the League, said that the Government of India Act of 1935 gave "two per cent of responsibility" and ninety-eight per cent safeguards and spe-

cial responsibilities of the Governor-General. Even this two per cent of responsibility was hedged in by the constitution of two Houses of Federal Legislatures. He examined the ways and means to put pressure on the British Government to modify the constitution. Armed revolution was an impossibility, while non-co-operation had been tried and found a failure. There was left constitutional agitation which meant work inside and outside the Legislatures for releasing the forces which would make the British Government bend. But it could not be done by one community. It required all communities to stand shoulder to shoulder. He asserted that the Congress would never reach the goal which they all desired unless and until they approached the Muslims. But whether the Congress recognised their claims or not, they owed it not only to their own community but to their country at large to organise themselves and march along the road to freedom and ultimately attain their goal. If they succeeded in doing so, the Congress would be forced to come to them.

The British Government, it was obvious, were not anxious and enthusiastic about introducing central responsibility. The Princes' desire to have an All-India Federation had cooled down. At its session held at Lucknow in April, 1936, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress did not accept the new constitution, and asked for a Constituent Assembly to frame the Constitution. The result was continuous drift and inaction and nothing tangible was done for more than ten years till after the end of the Second World War.

Willington was succeeded by Linlithgow, unimaginative, pompous and rigid, who belonged to the bullock-cart age. Linlithgow and his Government, if they had so wished, could have secured the co-operation of the Princes but as the Government themselves were not keen in bringing about Federation, Linlithgow and his Political Department wasted two years and more in negotiating with each individual state for coming into the Federation. One senior Prince told me in Simla that instead of talking politics to him, Linlithgow talked to him about calories and vitamins and told him that he wanted to tour all over India on horse-back! But the Congress was equally responsible for the delay in ushering Federation. If the Congress had accepted Jinnah's advice to work constitu-

tionally inside and outside the Legislatures, and pressed for the early inauguration of the Federation, and co-operated with Jinnah and his Muslim League, things could well have been different. In view of the fact that all the political parties including the Congress condemned the Government of India Act of 1935 as retrograde and reactionary, it is not a little surprising that Birla in his memoirs records: "The Government of India bill 'fell short of independence', but Gandhiji, who was concentrating on his Harijan Movement as a necessary accompaniment of advance towards independence, realised that the Bill was capable of producing benefit, if worked in the right spirit!" Birla's efforts were directed towards making Gandhiji take a friendly attitude towards the new Government of India Act. But Birla complains that some Congressmen, on the other hand, saw nothing good in it and held that it should be *pilloried* as worse than the Montague Act.

At its annual session in December, 1936, at Faizpur, the Congress reiterated its rejection of the new Constitution and repeated its resolve not to submit to the Constitution or to co-operate with it, both inside and outside the legislatures, so as to end it! It once again asked for a Constituent Assembly. The question of acceptance or non-acceptance of office was put off till after the Provincial Legislature elections.

The elections in India to the various provincial legislatures took place in the early part of 1937. In its election manifesto the Congress spoke in two voices. They said Congressmen were being sent to the legislatures not to "co-operate in any way with the Act but to combat it and to wreck it". In another part, it stated what constructive steps Congress legislators would take to ameliorate the condition of the people.

The Congress did not expect to get absolute majorities in the Provinces. All that they hoped for was that it would be the biggest single party and would be in a position to make a majority by coalition with a numerically smaller party. Because of this, the Congress came to an understanding with the Muslim League prior to the elections. There was no written agreement but an understanding was arrived at in U.P. between Jawaharlal Nehru and Khaliquzaman that they would join their hands in opposition to the foreign Government in power and work together. This would not have been a new departure for the

Congress and the Muslim League, for, had not Motilal Nehru and Jinnah, and later, Bhulabhai and Liaquat Ali, worked harmoniously in the Legislative Assembly during the Twenties, the Thirties and also the early Forties? And what a powerful combination it was—this getting together of Motilal and Jinnah!

But as the results of the elections showed, the Congress secured absolute majority in five Provinces—Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. It was the biggest single party in four Provinces—Bombay, Bengal, Assam and N.W.F. Province.

In Bombay, the Congress was in a minority of one as against the combined strength of all other parties and groups. In the Punjab and Sind, the Congress was in a small minority.

The Muslim League also did well in the Provincial election.

The A.I.C.C. meeting at Delhi in the middle of March voted, thanks mainly to Gandhiji's support and in spite of Nehru's opposition in favour of accepting Ministries, after having rejected an amendment opposing acceptance of office. But the Congress wanted that the Governors would not use their special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to constitutional activities.

The Governors of the Provinces, in which the Congress obtained a clear or near majority of seats in the Legislature, were not prepared to give any assurance in the terms demanded by the Congress leaders regarding the exercise of their special powers. The negotiations failed.

Gandhiji issued a statement on 30th March:

"My desire was not to lay down any impossible condition.....I felt that this object could not be secured unless there was a gentlemanly understanding between Governors and their Congress Ministers that they would not exercise their special powers of interference so long as Ministers acted within the Constitution".

B. G. Kher was elected leader of the Congress Legislature Party in Bombay. Lord Brabourne, the Governor, invited him to form the Ministry. But Kher refused as the understanding required from the Governor was not forthcoming. Thereupon, Brabourne invited Sir Ali Mohamed Dehlavi, the leader of the next numerically strong Muslim League Party, to form the Mi-

nistry. Under instructions from Jinnah, Jinnah told me the whole story, Dehlavi pleaded his inability to accede to Brabourne's suggestion on the ground that in democracy the minority party could not form the Ministry. By the time Dehlavi returned to his residence, he had another telephone call from Lord Brabourne, asking him to see Brabourne immediately in his (Dehlavi's) personal capacity. Brabourne then asked him to join the Interim Ministry as an individual member of the Assembly and not as a member of any political party. The Interim Ministry was formed consisting of four unattached individual members. Jinnah resented Brabourne's unconstitutional act and wrote to him a strong letter of protest and criticism, accusing him of disrupting political parties. Three weeks later, I saw Brabourne. I told him that I was not spying on him or the Government House but I was prepared to bet that Brabourne had not met during the previous month Jinnah, Purshotamdas Thakurdas and Jayakar. Brabourne said I was right but why did I think he had not met them. My answer was: "If you had met any of these three leaders of Bombay, you would never have taken Jammadas Mehta in the Interim Ministry."

I spoke to these three friends of my talk with Brabourne. Within forty-eight hours he had sent for these three leaders and found out from them all about the Minister I had complained of. I came to know later that Brabourne had good reason to regret this particular appointment.

The Interim Ministry carried on its existence for three months. Behind the door negotiations were taking place for the ending of the dead-lock with the Congress. The Viceroy promised the utmost degree practicable of harmonious co-operation between the Government and the people and to avoid in every way, any clash of opinion as would be calculated to break down the Ministry. Though the original demand of the Congress was not conceded, the Congress decided to form Ministries in the Provinces (7th July, 1937).

Kher, the Chief Minister-designate, before forming the Ministry, saw Jinnah. He requested Jinnah to give him two members of his Muslim League to join the Ministry. Jinnah readily agreed and offered his and the Muslim League's fullest co-operation to the Congress Ministry. But what happened? Kher told me the whole story and later Jinnah confirmed it. The

High Command, Sardar Patel in particular, took Kher to task for having approached Jinnah. The High Command wanted no truck with Jinnah. So, Kher's request for two Muslim Leaguers in the Ministry was turned into a demand by the Congress that the Muslim Leaguers must resign from the Muslim League and join the Congress and then only would they be taken as Ministers! This was a humiliating condition for the Muslim League to accept. Jinnah rightly resented it. He therefore summararily rejected the Congress suggestion. He wanted to co-operate with the Congress Ministry but not by liquidating and sabotaging his own party.

A similar mistake was made in U.P. Nehru, elated by the success of the Congress, lost his balance and forgot the understanding which he had come to with Khaliquzaman. Nehru turned down Khaliquzaman's request for two Muslim Leaguers to join the Congress Ministry, in spite of the fact that it was with Khaliquzaman's help that Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was returned to the Assembly as a Congress Member.

These two incidents infuriated Jinnah. He was justified in feeling that the Congress wanted his co-operation only through humiliating him.

Imagine what would have happened in India if the Congress had the good sense, decency and political foresight in July, 1937 to accept the willing co-operation of Jinnah and his Muslim League to work harmoniously together in two major provinces of Bombay and U.P. Whenever the Congress leaders felt that they were strong and that they could and were likely to come to terms with the British, they ignored Jinnah and the Muslim League. The Congress thought that they had no more use of Muslim co-operation and that they could afford to insult and humiliate Jinnah.

This arrogance and lack of political foresight in July, 1937 was repeated time and again during the next ten years, culminating at last in the division of the country into India and Pakistan.

Jinnah lost complete faith in the bonafides and the wisdom of the Congress leaders—Gandhiji, Patel and Nehru, and unfortunately went sad and bitter.

At the Muslim League Session in Lucknow on 15th October, Jinnah castigated the Congress in no uncertain terms:



"The Muslim League stands for full national democratic self-government for India. A great deal of capital is made as to phrases more for the consumption of the ignorant and illiterate masses. Various phrases are used such as Purna Swaraj, self-government, complete independence, responsible government, substance of independence and dominion status. There are some who talk of complete independence. But it is no use having complete independence on your lips and the Government of India Act of 1935 in your hands. Those who talk of complete independence the most, mean the least what it means. Was the Gandhi-Irwin Pact in consonance with complete independence? Were the assurances that were required before the offices would be accepted and the provincial autonomy could be worked consistent with Purna Swaraj, and was the resolution, after the assurances were refused, accepting offices and working the provincial constitution enacted by the British Parliament and forced upon the people of India by the imperialistic power in keeping with the policy and programme and the declarations of the Congress party? Does wrecking mean working?

"The present leadership of the Congress, especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Mussalmans of India more and more. Wherever they are in a majority and wherever it suited them, they refused to co-operate with the Muslim League parties and demanded unconditional surrender and signing of their pledges.

"The demand was insistent, abjure your party and forswear your policy and programme and liquidate Muslim League; but where they found that they had not a majority like the North West Frontier Province, their sacred principle of collective responsibility disappeared, and promptly the Congress party was allowed in that province to coalesce with any other group. That any individual Mussalman member who was willing unconditionally to surrender and sign their pledges was offered a job as a Minister and was passed off as a Mussalman Minister, although he did not command the confidence and respect of an overwhelming majority of the Mussalman representatives in the legislatures. Those men are allowed to move about and pass off as Muslim Ministers for the 'loyal' services they have rendered to the Congress by surrendering and signing the pledge unconditionally and the degree of their reward is the extent of

their perfidy”.

The Congress gave up all pretence of wrecking the Constitution and undertook social reform and constructive legislation for the amelioration of the people. Kher, Chief Minister and Minister for Education and Labour, brought in legislation for primary education and prevention and speedy settlement of industrial disputes. Home Minister Munshi reorganised and expanded the work of the Children's Aid Society by starting a Children's Colony in Chembur. It was my good fortune to work with him as the Secretary of the Children's Aid Society. The Bombay Government also brought in partial prohibition and this legislation had beneficial results on the health and morale of the working classes. The Congress Governments made stay-in and sit-down strikes illegal. They amended the Indian Factories Act to make compulsory in factory creches for the children of the working mothers. Kher also tried to grapple with the housing difficulties in the city but only in a small way. The Congress Ministry passed legislation for Harijan uplift, penalising discriminations against the Harijans (untouchable depressed classes) in restaurants, temples and other public places.

But the Congress High Command made one serious political blunder which persists to-day. The top Congress leaders created a High Command to control and direct the ministries in the provinces in the work of administration. This step by making the ministries responsible to an outside coterie and not to the members of the legislatures and the electorate, struck at the very foundation of democratic government and deprived the ministries largely of initiative and reliance on their own judgment. For example, Vallabhbhai Patel took Kher to task, as stated earlier in this chapter, for approaching Jinnah for his co-operation.

Some important events and developments of 1937 have to be mentioned. In October, 1936, the Viceroy (Lord Linlithgow) asked C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, the Diwan-designate of Travancore to meet him in Simla before taking over charge as Dewan. Linlithgow told C. P. that he (Linlithgow) had heard that the Maharaja of Travancore on C. P.'s advice was to throw open the Hindu temples to the Harijans and Lord Linlithgow warned C. P. against such a step. C. P. gave an evasive, non-committal reply, but within a fortnight, during the birthday celebration

week of the Maharaja, the Maharaja issued the Temple Entry Proclamation on 12th November, 1936. Travancore was the first Indian State or Province to open temples to the Harijans. No other States in Indian India or in British India had dared take this first step. Linlithgow came to know of this only from the newspapers of the next day. The credit for this great step forward goes to the Maharaja, a great gentleman and a great patriot, his mother, H. H. Setu Parvatibai, and the Dewan, C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar.

Gandhiji came to Trivendrum to felicitate the Maharaja, and the Maharani and the Dewan on the great step they had taken, and addressed a huge public meeting under the chairmanship of the Dewan.

In Trivendrum I discussed with Gandhiji his public prayer meetings. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur was present. I expressed my fears to him that these prayers were setting a premium on laziness and were also raising the other superstitions, viz., that once you offered prayer you had nothing more to do, but only rely on God to help you out of your difficulties. He did not agree. As far back as 1925, I told Mrs. Besant in Adyar that these outer forms of religion and prayer-meetings, besides setting a premium on laziness let ignorant fools, humbugs and hypocrites and superstitious people to pose as being very religious. As regards Gandhiji, he was exploiting for political purposes these public prayers to keep and continue his hold on ignorant and superstitious people. His public prayers were nothing but a farce.

Mrs. Monica Felton in "I Met Rajaji" quotes Rajaji (Mr. C. Rajagopalachariar): "In our faith the stress is on individual worship. Gandhiji encouraged congressional worship and so does Vinoba Bhave, both of them mainly for national reasons, but the genius of Hinduism is gentler than that".

In the third week of June, 1937 came to India Capt. Roland Edgar Strunk, Special Correspondent of the "Volkischer Beobachter", the official newspaper of the German Government and of Hitler's Nazi Party. He had with him big references from London and Berlin. Lord Brabourne was therefore helping him in Bombay. Brabourne wrote to a friend that Capt. Strunk had come to India to make a study of the political and economic situation and to report personally to Hitler on his return to Berlin.

Strunk came to see me with a request from Brabourne asking me to fix a meeting for Strunk with Gandhiji. I had an interesting talk with Strunk for an hour and a half. He had recently spent six months with Franco in Spain. He told me that he was being sent to all these different places by Hitler as his personal representative to get first hand information. He wanted to spend three months in India.

I wrote to Mahadeo Desai who replied immediately fixing an appointment for Strunk to meet Gandhiji at Segaon (Wardha) on 24th June. Mahadeo further asked me to warn Strunk that the present political situation was unsettled. What Gandhiji and Strunk talked was never disclosed but I hope Mahadev Desai made a note of this talk in his Diary. Unfortunately, Mahadev Desai's Diaries have not yet been published.

In 1958 was published Nehru's "Bunch of Letters" and in 1959 Abul Kalam Azad's "India Wins Freedom". These two books give a clear version of the events of the last 50 years. They reveal that all was not well in the apparently happy family of the Congress High Command. Whilst it was true that the Working Committee passed meeting after meeting unanimous resolutions, those of us who have been active in political life know that there were wide differences of opinion amongst these four or five central figures of the Congress, Gandhiji, Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Azad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Rajaji and every time these unanimous resolutions were published, within a week or so there were six or seven different interpretations of these resolutions given through the press statements of the leaders. Azad has disclosed that fundamental differences there were between these leaders on all important points and yet it is a marvel that they stuck together. Behind the scenes there was trouble. How much of it was personal antagonism because of entirely different outlook towards the problems? We have to go elsewhere, namely, to other publications to find some answer to some of the questions that arise.

Nehru, the President of the Congress in 1937, had admitted a resolution at the A.I.C.C. meeting in Calcutta moved by Minoo Masani, then a Congress Socialist, expressing emphatic protests of the A.I.C.C. against the ruthless policy of repression and suppression of civil liberties in the Mysore State and after sending greetings to the people of Mysore and wishing them success in

their legitimate and non-violent struggle "appeal to the people of Indian States and British India to give all support and encouragement to the people of Mysore in their struggle against the states for right to self-determination". Gandhiji, Sardar Patel and Dr. Rajendra Prasad who belonged to the right-wing of the Congress considered this resolution *ultra vires* and were angry with Nehru for having not ruled it out. Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Patel and other members of the Working Committee resigned from the Working Committee as a protest. Who inspired and who instigated this resignation? Gandhiji.

Gandhiji wrote to Patel on 1st November, 1937: "I have come to the decision that it would be best if all of you resign from the Congress Working Committee. You should resign even if in the end others do not. Jamnalal is sure to come out. After that who remains? It will be a bankruptcy (for Nehru), won't it? But there is nothing against your coming out. I do not think it absolutely necessary to have the Maulana's support. If you do not come out, you may later have to go in spite of yourself. I have seen that Subhas is unsteady but no one except him can be the president of the Haripura Congress. I was thinking about it last night and again this morning. Others may do as they wish. But I feel certain that you should go out of it. If the provinces do not look after their own interests then nothing can be achieved, and everything will be lost.

"Regarding Mysore there is an increasing difference of opinion, and you should make it clear that with such differences you cannot remain in the Committee. It is for you to think it all out by yourself. I see no advantage in your continuing on the Working Committee. It would be good if you keep Gujarat in your hands, but if it goes, let it go. To swim with the stream is asking for trouble. I have suggested that you all should tender your resignations. All of you decide together. What is happening today cannot in any way be considered proper. Everything else that has happened is improper too. Let Jawaharlal form his own Working Committee. If he himself resigns, that would not be proper; that must be made clear to him."

It is certain that Gandhiji could not have told Nehru of his (Gandhiji's) letter to Patel of 1st November, because when Nehru was upset at receiving from his colleagues their resignations

from the Working Committee and complained to Gandhiji about it, Gandhiji wrote to him asking him not to lose his temper and to have a sense of humour"!

The year 1937 ended cheerfully. The Congress Governments in the Provinces consisting mostly of the right wing under the leadership of Sardar Patel took to constructive work. Nehru had no hold on these Ministries. The relations between the Governors and the Congress Ministries were extremely friendly, to mention only two, Sir Roger Lumley, Bombay, (now Lord Scarborough) and Sir Harry Haig in U.P. co-operated fully with the Ministries. If only the Congress had come to terms with Jinnah and his Muslim League, we would have had a different story of India during the last twenty-eight years, no partition, no Pakistan but a strong and happy United India; no Kashmir problem, no refugee problem, no massacre of 1947, no suicidal military expenses, more concentration on internal economic and social problems, no food shortage.

## INDEX

- Aarey Colony for Milk—96  
 Adam C. G. (Home Secretary)—  
     237  
 Afghanistan—War with—May,  
     1919—113  
 Aga Khan—36, 102, 340, 383,  
     400, 439  
 Age of Consent Committee—265  
 Ahmedabad—Martial Law in—  
     109  
 Ahmedabad Textile Labour Asso-  
     ciation—112  
 Aiyangar, Kasturi Ranga—76  
 Ali Brothers—138, 140, 147, 166,  
     Apology—167, 182, 183, 184  
 Aligarh University—322  
 All Parties Conference—335, 340,  
     348, 352, 364  
 Alwar, Maharaja of—72  
 Ambedkar, Dr. B. R.—9, 152, 383,  
     402, 428  
 Amritsar Congress—137  
 Anrit Kaur, Rajkumari—470  
 Annsuyaben Sarabhai—85, 90, 189  
 Anderson Sir John, Governor of  
     Bengal—418, 421  
 Andrews, C. F.—88, 107, 116, 281  
 Ansari, Dr. M.A.—325, 337, 396  
 Archbishop of Bombay—205  
 Arundale, George S.—17, 38, 111  
 Asquith, H.H. Prime Minister of  
     England—28  
 Atom—18  
 Attlee, Earl, Prime Minister of  
     England—Foreword—124, 136,  
     330, 379, 435, 456  
 Azad, Abul Kalam—471  
 Bahadurji, D. N.—45  
 Bahadurji, Mrs. Maneckbai—85  
 Baldwin—332, 398  
 Banarjea, Surendra Nath—53, 96  
 Banker, Shankerlal—4, 80, 85, 90,  
     197  
 Baptista, Joseph—125  
 Beaman, Sir Frank—200  
 Beggars' Relief Committee—90  
 Bengal anarchists—58  
 Bengal Ordinances—355  
 Benthall Sir Edward—415  
 Besant Annie—Chapters I, II, III,  
     IV, V, VI—65, 68, 71, 73, 76,  
     79, 83, 89, 90, 93, 97, 98, 100,  
     101, 102, 109, 111, 113, 114,  
     116 — Besant visits Jallianwal-  
     la Bagh—119, 426, 447, Ch.  
     XXXIII, 470—Chapter XI, 139,  
     142, 146, 152, 155, 156—Scout  
     Movement 163 — Besant meets  
     Lord Reading—165, 167, 169,  
     Tours round Mopla riots affect-  
     ed area—180, 183, 184, 190,  
     191, 201, 241, 266, 274, 281,—  
     Chapter XXII—Mrs. Besants'  
     letters—Chapter XXIII.  
 Bhagat Singh—394  
 Bhurgri—192  
 Bhopal, Nawab of—382  
 Bikaner, Maharaja Gangasingh—  
     382  
 Birkenhead, Lord—286, 336, 356  
 Birla, G.D.—399, 417—published  
     "In the Shadow of the Mahat-  
     ma", 429, President of All India  
     Anti-Untouchability League  
     (1932)—442, 464  
 Bolitho, Hector—322  
 Bolshevism—141  
 Bombay Children's Bill—236  
 Bombay Presidency Association —  
     60  
 Bombay Vigilance Association—  
     218

- Bose, Subas—418  
 Boycott of Legislature—365  
 Brabourne, Lord—465, 470  
 Bradlaugh, Charles—5, 303, 454  
 Brailsford, H. N.—25  
 Brelvi, S. A., Editor — “Bombay Chronicle”—326  
 Bright, Miss Esther—123  
 British Secret Service—374  
 British Women in India — Aga Khan’s Criticism—55  
 Broacha, Sir Shapurji—28  
 Brothels—202  
 Bullitt, William (afterwards U.S. Ambassador to U.S.S.R.) meets Dr. Besant—126, 135  
 Burrows, Herbert—318  
 Butler, Sir Harcourt, Lt. Governor of U.P.—36  
 Casey, Lord (Governor of Bengal) 168, 280  
 Cato, Lord—270  
 Central Hindu College—14  
 Chagla, M. C., Ambassador in U.S. for India—256  
 Chamberlain, Austin—29, 164  
 Champaran Satyagraha—4, 86, 87  
 Chandavarkar, Sir Narayan—60  
 Chauri, Chaura—194  
 Chelmsford, Lord—28  
 Chetty, Shanmukhan, M.L.A.—297, 399  
 Children’s Act—202  
 Chintamani, C. Y.—45, 299  
 Chirol, Sir Valentine—21  
 Churchill, Winston—28, 118, 164, 371, 409, 437, 460  
 Civil Disobedience—98, Dangers of—99, 366  
 Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee—272  
 Clairvoyance—18, 99  
 Clemenceau of France—135  
 Coatman—258  
 Commercialised Vice—201  
 “Commonweal”—Weekly news paper—22  
 Commonwealth of India Bill—8, 124, 300, Manifeatures—305, 309, 448 (Conference)  
 Communist Party—445  
 Congress—Belgaum—284  
 Congress Committee on Punjab Disturbances—117  
 Congress Nagpur Session, Dec. 1920—155  
 Congress Special Session—Calcutta (Sept. 1920)—151  
 Congress Session at Lahore, Dec. 1929—365  
 Connaught, Duke of—158  
 Constituent Assembly—463  
 Cotton, Sir Henry—30  
 Cousins Norman—458  
 Lady Cowasji Jehangir—219  
 Cowasji Jehangir, Sir—154, 295  
 Craddock, Sir Reginald—35  
 Crewe, Lord—131,  
 Crawford, Col.—258  
 Curtis, Sir Lionel—of the Round Table Group—36, 37, 71  
 Curzon, Lord—The Viceroy & Governor General of India—22, 163, 219, 271.  
 Dadabhai Naoroji—4, 29, 30, 61, 64  
 “Daily Herald”—Labour daily—126  
 Dandi March—371  
 Dange, S. A.—358  
 Das, C. R.—9, 45, 46, 53, 104, 117, 138, 169, 188, sends message to Gandhiji—189, 190, 191, 195, 196, 272, 281, and Birkenhead Condemns Violence—286, —Das and Faridpur Conference Speech—287, 425, 455  
 Davis, Miss Kathleen,—220, 242  
 Dehlavi Sir Ali Mohamed—465  
 Delhi Congress—Dec. 1918—79  
 Desai, Bhulabhai—45, 86, 396, 465  
 Desai, Mahadev—11, 195, 424, 427, Diary—471  
 Devadassis—221  
 Dicey—269



- Discipleship—4, 18  
 Dominion Status—356  
 Dyer, Brigadier General—114,  
   Evidence before Hunter Com-  
   mission—117, 118  
 England, India and Afghanistan  
   —6.  
 Farson Negley—talk with Irwin  
   about Gandhiji—393  
 Fazl-i-Hussain, Sir, Member of the  
   Viceroy's Executive Council—  
   385  
 Federal Union—382  
 Fischer, Louis—103, 404  
 Flexner ("Prostitution in Europe")  
   —213  
 Forty-five Years with Labour (by  
   the author)—9  
 French Revolution—21  
 Fundamental Rights—74  
 Gandhiji—3, 4, 8, 26, 34, 46, 53,  
   62, 66 — Gandhiji, a social re-  
   former—71, 73, 74, 77, 78, —  
   Chapter IX, 98, 103, 104, 106,  
   108, 109, 110, 111, — Gandhiji  
   isolationist,—112, 113, 114,  
   116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 134,  
   138, 141, 143, 146, 150, —  
   Gandhiji — Philosophical anar-  
   chist—156, 166, Coimbatore  
   Prostitutes meet Gandhiji—166,  
   Gandhiji meets Lord Reading in  
   Simla—166, Collects Rs. 1 crore  
   for Tilak Swaraj Fund—169—  
   Chapter XIV—Prohibition, 182,  
   184, 187, 188, 189, 190, —  
   Threatens Civil Disobedience—  
   193, Gandhiji suspends mass ci-  
   vil disobedience movement—  
   195, Gandhiji arrested—196,  
   197, 199, 253, 269, 270, Under-  
   goes operation — 283—Fast  
   (17th Sept.)—298, 341, 353, 363,  
   365, 368, 370, 388, 391, 397—  
   Gandhiji sails for London—398,  
   reaches London, 409, 412—  
   Gandhiji's arrest—413, 426, 438,  
   442, 450, 454, 458, 464, 470,  
   471, 472—Gandhi—Irwin Pact  
   —389.  
 Gandhiji, Kasturba—26, 190  
 General Mill Strike in Bombay,  
   Jan. 1919—80  
 George Lloyd (Governor of Bom-  
   bay) 85, 107, 110, 185, 196  
 King George V—89, 137, 382,  
   Speech at Round Table Confer-  
   ence—391, 407  
 Giordi Bruno—11  
 Gladstone—312  
 Gokhale, Gopal Krishna—8, 27, 62,  
   81  
 Gold Standard—England goes off  
   —398  
 Gracey, General Sir Douglas—323  
 Graham Pole, Major David—25,  
   36, 68, 124, 219, 300, 327, 329,  
   372, 390—letter from Pole &  
   hundred Parliament members to  
   Lord Irwin—460  
 Griffiths, (Police Commissioner)—  
   65, 109  
 Guest, Dr. Hayden, M.P.—313  
 Gwalior, the Maharaja of—187.  
 Haig, Sir Harry—473  
 Hailey, Sir Malcolm—420  
 Haldane, Lord—311, 448  
 Hardinge, Lord—28  
 "Harijan"—28  
 Lala Har Kishan Lal—117  
 Hartal in Delhi—106, Hartal in  
   Bombay—107  
 Hartsorne, Vernon—330  
 Hayward, Sir Maurice (Home  
   Member)—206  
 Henderson, Arthur—124  
 Hitler—470, 471  
 Hoare, Sir Samuel—398, 400 —  
   "Nine Troubled Years" 417, 431,  
   462  
 Home Rule League—8, Home Rule  
   League started—Sept. 1916—  
   35. Home Rule League, Lon-  
   don—June, 1916—123  
 Horniman, B.G. 28, 45, 100, 101,  
   108, Editor "Bombay Chronicle"

- Hotson, Sir Ernest—240, 372, 441  
House of Lords — Resolution on General Dyer—141  
“How India Wrought for Freedom”—32  
Hume, A.O.—23  
Hunter Commission—116  
Huxley—312  
Hypatia—11  
Ibrahim Rahimtoola — 270, 398  
Inchcape, Lord—270  
Independence—365  
“India: A Nation”—31  
Indian Cinematograph Committee—258  
Indian League, London—416  
Indianisation of Services—271  
Indian States Delegation—382  
Industrial Disputes Committee—199  
Irwin, Halifax Lord—358, 363, 374, 380 defines “Dominion Status” for India, 391—Irwin writes to King George V.—413, 442, 449  
Islington, Lord—132  
Jallianwalla Bagh—115  
Jamboree—329  
Japanese Consul General—211  
Japanese Prostitutes—211  
Jamnadas Dwarkadas—4, 162, 189, 303  
Jayakar, M.R.—45, 97, 117, 192, 321, 330, 341, 374, 383, 405, 438, 466  
Jinarajadas, Mrs. Dorothy—220  
Jinarajadas—77, 100, 124, 241, 449, 450  
Jinnah, Mrs. Ruttic—61, 79, 112, 152, 220, 323, 348, 349, 399, 406, 415, 438, 439, 448  
Jinnah M.A.—4, 36, 45, 46, 48, 50, 59, — Chapt. VII — Jinnah’s Chamber in High Court—59, 73, 77, 78, 79, 92, 96, 97, 108, 110, 111, 120, 133, 139, 142, 151, 152, 153, 156, 192, 195, 220, 262, 320, 328, 334, 340, 455, — Chapter XXVI,—357, 361, 363, 383, 441, 462, 465, 466  
Joshi, Sir Moropant—265  
Joshi, N.M.—112.  
Kashmir—104  
Kelkar N. C.—65, 77, 302  
Kelvin, Lord—315  
Kerr, Philip (afterwards Lord Lothian)—36, 421  
Khaliquzaman—464, 467  
Khaparde—65  
Kheda Satyagraha—92  
Kher, Bala Saheb, Chief Minister of Bombay—173, 465, 466, 469  
Khilafat Movement—141, — Dangers of—146  
Kidwai, Rafi Ahmed—461  
Kipling—319  
Kitchlew, Dr.—138  
Kripalani, Acharya J.B.—4  
Krishnamachari, Sir V.T.—258  
Krishnamurti, J.—16, Vehicle of the “World Teacher”—17, 124, 135, 303, 348  
Kunzru, Pandit Hridaynath—189  
Lutyens, Lady Emily—123, 303, 449  
Labour Government—355  
Labour Party Conference, Nottingham—125  
Lala Lajpat Rai—26, 112, “Young India”—125, 151, 167, 195, 334  
Lansbury, George—8, 123, 221, 304, 327, 393, 458  
Leadbeater, C.W.—18, 450  
Ishaquat, Ali Khan—96, 440, 465  
Liberal Federation—74  
Linguistic Provinces—144, 156  
Linlithgow, Viceroy & Governor General—352, 460, 463, 468  
Lloyd George—36, 47, 135, 271  
Lowndes, Sir George—50  
Lucknow Congress—36  
Lumley, Sir Roger—250—(new Lord Scarborough)473.  
MacDonald, Ramsay—130, 304,

- 358, 373, 380, 385, 398, forms National Govt.—404, 405, 416  
 MacLagan, Sir Edward, Lt. Governor of the Punjab—116  
 Madhaya Rao, late Dewan of Travancore, Mysore & Baroda—39  
 Mahamudabad, Raja—53, 65, 325  
 Majumdar—113  
 Make-believism—103, 199  
 Malviya, Pandit Madan Mohan—14, 79, 139, 168, 192, 401, 428  
 Malthusian League—303  
 Manu Gandhi, Miss—92  
 "Marching Orders"—22  
 Masani, Minoo—471  
 Masters of the Wisdom—18  
 Mayo, Miss Catherine—263, 333  
 Meerut Conspiracy Case—355  
 Mehta, Sir Chunilal V.—172, 218, 238, 270, 327  
 Mehta, Jamshed Nusserwanji—140  
 Mehta, Sir Pherozshah—8, 27, 30, 62, 139  
 Menon, Krishna—111  
 Minto, Lady—102  
 Mirza Ismail, Sir—351  
 Mody, H.P.—27  
 Moonje—383  
 Montague - Chelmsford proposals July 1918—72  
 Montague, Edwin S. Secy. of State—47, 53, 54—Chapt. VIII, 114, 131, 139, 164  
 Mopla Riots—179  
 Mosley, Lady Cynthia—219  
 Mosley, Oswald—219  
 Mountbatten, Earl—368  
 Muddiman, Sir Alexander—275, Reforms Committee—320  
 Munshi, K.M.—4, 45, 242, 469  
 Murray, Gilbert—127  
 Muslim League—320  
 Mussolini—409  
 Naidu, Sarojini—52, 63, 76, 108, 302, 451, pays tribute to Mrs. Besant.  
 Nair, Sir Sankaran, "Gandhi and Anarchy"—180, 192  
 Natarajan, K.—60  
 National Baby Week—302  
 National Convention—293  
 "National Reformer"—40, 310  
 Nehru Committee—337, — Report 338, — Mani features—339  
 Nehru, Jawaharlal—4, — Joins Theosophical Society—16, 35, 45, 52, 62, — Meets Gandhiji, Dec. 1916,—86, 104, 106, 112, 114—Criticise total prohibition in Bombay—173, 195, 334, 338, 355, 361, 365, 366, 368, 371, 373, 389, 395, 410, 411—Nehru's arrest, 318, 422, 425, 426, 444, 445, 454, 456,—tribute to Mrs. Besant,—458, 463, 464, 467, 471  
 Nehru, Motilal—8, 45, 52, 117, President, Amritsar Congress — 137, 152, Criticises Gandhiji for obtaining Ali Brother's Apology—168, 188, 195, 262, 276, 325, 355, Motilal Nehru passes away 389, 455, 458, 465  
 Neogy, K.C.—258  
 Nethercol, Dr. Arthur—5, Benaras Hindu University incident, 1916—82, 111, 456  
 "New India", 26, 34, 38, 45, 303  
 Nizam H.E.H. of Hyderabad—351  
 O'Dwyer, Sir Michael (Lt. Governor of Punjab)—108, 113, 114  
 Olcott, Col.—12  
 Olivier, Lord—274  
 Orlando of Italy—135  
 Ormsby—Gore—132  
 Paranjpye, Dr. R.P.—270  
 Parekh, Gokaldas Kahamdass—92  
 Passive Resistance—100  
 Patel, Sardar Vallabhbhai—9, 66, 93, 190, 369, 371, 390, 394, 396, to 412 — his arrest, 424, 443, 446, 450, 467, 471  
 Patel, Vithalbhai—96, 133, 362, 371, 374  
 Pattani, Sir Prabhashankar—374

- Peel, Lord—271  
 Pentland, Lord, Governor of Madras—34  
 Pethick—Lawrence, Mrs.—314  
 Petit, Sir Dinshaw—60  
 Prevention of Prostitution Bill—215  
 Princely States—liquidation of—20  
 Prohibition — Directive Principle of the Constitution—170, 173—U.P. & Kerala Govts. oppose Prohibition—176  
 Provincial Autonomy—189  
 Public Safety Bill—357  
 Purna Swaraj—394  
 Purshottamdas Thakurdas—154, 222, 323  
 Pusseyfort Johnson—169  
 Quit India—383  
 Quraishi Shoaib—383  
 Radhakrishnan, Dr.—106  
 Rajendra Prasad—4, 73, 471  
 Rajgopalachari C. (Rajaji)—4, 103, 471  
 C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, Sir—4, 31, 45, 58, 70, 75, 120, 122, 125, 327, 340, 364, 387, 396—C.P. interviews Gandhiji—398, 438, 449, 456, 469  
 Rangaswami Aiyangar—325, 401, 402  
 Reading, Lord—67, 163, Lord Reading breaks down—188, intention to call a Round Table Conference in Calcutta—189 — Reading gives way to Lloyd—196, 387, 427  
 Reed, Sir Stanley—134, 199  
 Red Light district—202  
 Responsive Co-operation—137  
 Retrenchment Committee—270  
 Rishi Agastya—22  
 Roberts, Charles, M.P.—54  
 Robertson, Sir Benjamin Governor of C.P.—34  
 Ronaldshey (Governor of Bengal) contacts C.R. Das—189  
 Roosevelt, Franklin—135, 455  
 Round Table Conference—366  
 Rowlatt Committee—95  
 Sabarmati Ashram—189  
 Sankaran Nair, Hon. Sir—36  
 Sandhurst Committee—322, 323  
 Sankey Lord—Lord Chancellor—383, 404  
 Sapru, Sir Tej Bahadur—8, 45—Tribute to—Dr. Besant—48, 52, 96, 189, 192, 193, 194, 262, 300, 330, 341, 362, 363, 382, 401, 428, 432, 438, 449, 453—tribute to Mrs. Besant  
 Sarabhai, Ambalal—90, 192  
 Sardar Griha—59  
 Sasson, Sir Victor—219  
 Sastri, Srinivas—8, 79, 81, 82, 96, 133, 139, 143, 146, 315, 366, 383, 391, 400, 408, 411, 416, 429, 442  
 Satyagraha Sabha & Pledge—100  
 Second World War—460  
 Selbourne, Lord (President, Joint Select Committee Montague Bill)—131  
 Setalvad, Chimanlal—8, 36, 62, 79, 93, 116, 117, 118, 123, 147, 154, 187, 188, 190, 191, 194, 270, 383, 400, 428, 432  
 Sethna, Sir Phiroze—374  
 Shafi, Sir Mohamed—325, 340  
 Shamballa—22  
 Shanti Niketan—152  
 Shaw, Bernard—5, 11, 124, 454  
 Shiva Rao—303, 448  
 Shivaji—21  
 Sikandar Hyat Khan—352  
 Simon Commission—63, Appointment of—326, 374  
 Simon, Sir John—359  
 Sinha, Sir Satyendra (afterwards Lord)—27, 131, 132  
 Sinn Fein Movement in India—86  
 Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Aiyar—146, 460  
 "Slaves of Customs"—263  
 Slocombe, George—372

- Snowdon, Phillip—123  
 Sobani, Umar—4, 108, 152, 172  
 Sokhey, Col. & Mrs.—349  
 South Africa, East Africa & Kenya—142  
 Spoor, Ben—132  
 Srinawas Aiyangar—325, 340  
 Steel Industry (Protection) Bill—276  
 Strangman—63  
 Strunk, Capt. Reland Edgar—470  
 Stuart Findlater—420  
 Subramaniam Aiyar, Sir—17, 40, 47, 77  
 Suffragist Movement—314  
 Swaraj Party—198, 272  
 Syed Hasan Imam—73, 130  
 Sydenham, Lord—132, 303  
 Tagore, Rabindranath—8, 116, 118, 190  
 Tairsee, L. R.—101  
 Tata, R. D.—276  
 Telang, Justice K.T.—60  
 Telang, P. K.—45, 60, 79, 100, 102, 120, letters—130, 447  
 Telephone Girls—200  
 Temple, Sir William, Archbishop of York—392  
 "Through Muslim Eyes", Times of India—326  
 Tilak, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar—8, 27, 35, 36, 52, 58 — Not opposed to Social Reforms—58, 59, 65, 75, 76, 77, 93, 133, 137, 150, 151, 454  
 Tillet Ben, M.P.—313  
 Times of India—453—tribute to Mrs. Besant  
 Tolstoy, Count—105  
 Trade Disputes Bill—357  
 Trade Union Congress—All India—112  
 Traffic in Women & Children — League of Nation's Report—222  
 Travancore, Maharaja of—469  
 Treaty of Severes—140  
 Treaty of Trianon—447  
 Turner, Ben—312  
 "United India"—129  
 Vijaya Raghavachariar, C. of Salem—74  
 Vincent, Sir William—108, 162, 185  
 Vivekanand, Swami—13  
 Wacha, Dinshaw—8, 29, 30, 154  
 Wadala Salt Raid—372  
 Wadia, B. P.—17, 38, 112, 120  
 Wadia, Sir Ness Maternity Home—198  
 "Wake up, India"—22  
 War Conference—77, 93  
 Walpakhadi—Bhangi Colony—90  
 Wedderburn, Sir William—79, 30, 62  
 Wedgwood Ben—362, 386, 398  
 West, Geoffrey—11, 448  
 Whipping—214  
 Willingdon, Lord, Governor of Bombay—28, 164, 388, 394, 398, 410, 413, 429  
 Williams, Rushbrook—104  
 Wilson, Woodrow, President of the U.S.—47, 125, 455  
 Winterton, Lord—221, 327  
 Countess De La Warr—123  
 Webb Sydney—454  
 Yajnik, Indulal—46, 92, 282  
 Young India—4, 28  
 Zafrullah, Sir Mahumud—399





